

Praying Your Life into Order Physically

By Rachel McMichael

Almost six years ago, I was working in the corporate world when I learned I was pregnant with our daughter. My husband and I began praying about a new job I could do from home. As laughable as it seemed, the Lord directed me to pursue certification as a personal trainer.

My experience with fitness and healthy eating was limited. I knew the importance of being active, drinking plenty of water, and choosing healthy foods, but I didn't translate that knowledge into action.

As I learned more about the science of our bodies, I became more aware of the impact my daily choices were having—not just on how I looked and felt, but on my ability to concentrate, think clearly, remember, and stay alert.

One Harvard Medical School article says researchers “found that regular aerobic exercise, the kind that gets your heart and your sweat glands pumping, appears to boost the size of the hippocampus, the brain area involved in verbal memory and learning.”¹

The article explains: “The benefits of exercise come directly from its ability to reduce insulin resistance, reduce inflammation, and stimulate the release of growth factors—chemicals in the brain that affect the health of brain cells, the growth of new blood vessels in the brain, and even the abundance and survival of new brain cells.

Indirectly, exercise improves mood and sleep, and reduces stress and anxiety.”

Science is proving what most of us have known all along—that

people who take care of themselves physically have increased mental ability, have a greater ability to reason and think critically, and have better memory recall.

Hand in Hand

I see a connection to my prayer life, too. In fact, I believe my spiritual health and physical health go hand in hand. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:7, "The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." To be spiritually disciplined is to be disciplined in every area of life.

When I'm at my healthiest, I'm more likely to get up early to read my Bible and pray. I'm better able to memorize Scripture. Throughout my day, I'm more attentive and less tired, and I'm able to speak more clearly, think more clearly, and react more clearly.

When I'm at my healthiest, I think and pray less about my own ailments. My mind has a higher capacity to think about other things, which allows me to pay more attention to other people, listen well, empathize, and even spend more time praying for other people.

My husband says that when he's 80 years old, he wants to be healthy enough to give his all to the Lord the way he can today. For all of us, our commitment to fitness today is an investment in our current quality of life and a way we can serve the Lord as we age. In his book *Living Fit*, Dr. Ronnie Floyd writes, "While God determines your number of days on this earth, you will determine the quality and effectiveness of each of these days."²

I don't always get this right. Even as a certified personal trainer who understands both the science and benefits, it isn't always easy for me to live out these principles. But I know I'm not alone!

Here are two action steps to prayerfully commit to the Lord:

- First, identify one simple step to make your diet healthier, and then commit that step to the Lord. Honestly evaluate your dietary habits, and pick one area to step it up! A great strategy for most of us would be to add an additional vegetable to two meals per week.
- Second, identify one simple step you can add to your weekly exercise routine, and commit that step to the Lord. If you do not have a fitness routine, consider committing to some type of exercise two days a week.

God wants us to seek Him first. He cares about every part of us—the spiritual, the relational, the emotional, and even the physical.

1Heidi Goodman, “Regular Exercise Changes the Brain to Improve Memory, Thinking Skills,” Harvard Health Blog (April 5, 2018): <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/regular-exercise-changes-brain-improve-memory-thinking-skills-201404097110>.

2Ronnie Floyd, *Living Fit* (B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 59.

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