

The Joys of Exercise



SABBATH—APRIL 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 139:13–15; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Ephesians 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:3–5; 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 11:6.

MEMORY VERSE: “But those who trust in the Lord will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak” (Isaiah 40:31, Nlrv).

ROGER BANNISTER, A FAMOUS BRITISH RUNNER, HAD WORKED VERY HARD in preparing for running the mile in under four minutes. He had trained and practiced for the run. He had even included tough mountain climbing in his training. Meanwhile, others around the world had their eyes on the prize that meant so much to this young athlete.

May 6, 1954, finally came. It was the day that Bannister had been preparing his heart, spirit, mind, and body for all these years. On the morning before, Bannister slipped on a polished floor and limped the rest of that day! But when the race began the next day, Bannister ran the mile in 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds. He was the first person to run the mile in under four minutes!

The apostle¹ Paul uses this symbol² from sports. He encourages us to “keep on running the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1, Nlrv). But Paul is talking about a race so much more important than the one Bannister won! This race requires our best possible fitness of spirit and body. An important part of that fitness is exercise, our topic this week.

To view and/or download a Hope Channel show on this week's lesson, visit www.lifesbeat.org.

1. apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.

2. symbol—an object, mark, sign, or person that stands for, or means the same thing as, another object, idea, or thing.

SUNDAY—APRIL 11**THE SPIRITUAL ATHLETE
(2 Timothy 4:7)**

What was Paul talking about in 2 Timothy 4:7? What point was he making?

Over many hundreds of years, humans (men, women, and children) have been interested in sports. Many have admired the wonderful feats (acts) of the athlete. Who has not at times wanted to do what these people have done with their bodies? But, whatever their natural abilities were, most of these people succeeded in what they did through hard work.

Someone once asked an award-winning, long-distance runner if the runner thought this person could become a great runner too. “Sure,” the athlete answered. “All you need to do is run 15 miles a day for 6 days a week. Do that for a year and you will have a good chance of making it.”

The Bible often compares³ the life of faith to an athlete practicing hard for his race. What basic points are 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Philippians 3:12–14; and 2 Timothy 2:3–5 making? How have you experienced the meaning of these verses yourself?

One so easily can form a wrong idea of how much (or little) joggers, cyclists,⁴

and runners are enjoying themselves from looking at their faces. It sometimes may seem that their training is a punishment.⁵ But there are many good things about keeping up with an exercise program. These will be discussed later in the week. These good things come from a person’s faithfulness in keeping up with the exercise program itself. There are certain rules that need to be followed. Regular exercise is important. There must be a goal and sometimes even a prize.

These principles (rules) need to be used in both the fitness of the spirit and the body. To be spiritually fit, we need to focus on Jesus. We need to read His Word, pray, and think about Him. There are so many things that draw our attention away from Jesus. These may include good and noble causes—our work, studies, or even church events. But we need to throw out things that keep us from growing in grace.⁶ We also need to keep important goals first if we are going to finish strong.



We need to throw out the things in our lives that keep us from growing in grace.

3. compares—to show how two or more things are the same.

4. cyclists—people riding bicycles.

5. punishment—a penalty (price to be paid) for, or the result of, doing something wrong; when someone must suffer loss or pain for doing something bad, wrong, or against the law.

6. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

MONDAY—APRIL 12**WHEN FAITH'S MUSCLES
BECOME WEAK (Ephesians 2:8)**

How are Ephesians 2:8 and Hebrews 11:6 related? Most important, how do we build and keep the faith that we have been given as a gift?

Those who have suffered a broken bone or serious joint sprain have had splints put on for healing to take place. Supportive casts, bandages, and even surgical pins are used to help keep an injured joint or broken limb in place. As a result, the muscles around that area are not used. With this lack of use, the muscles become thin and weak. When the healing of the bone or joint has taken place, movement begins to return. And with continued use and exercise, muscle strength returns.

“Action is the rule of good health. Every organ of the body has its chosen work. Its strength depends on how well it does its work. The normal action of all the organs gives strength. But if they are not allowed to exercise, they may weaken and die. Bind up an arm, even for a few weeks. Then free it from its bands. You will see that it is weaker than the one you have been using during the same time. No action has the same result on all the muscles.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 237, 238.

So it is with faith. If faith is not exercised (used), it does not grow. The

important movements and actions of the limbs (legs and arms) and body of faith cannot take place. Faith is a gift, but suppose we do not use it. Suppose we do not make choices based on it. Suppose we do not reach out and claim God's promises. Suppose we are not willing to take chances based on faith. Suppose we will not use faith to the point of praying for God's help. Then we are in danger of losing our faith.

How sad! Faith is one of the most important of all God's gifts. Only people who know what it is like to live in this world without faith can tell you just how wonderful and important a gift like faith really is.

How often are you exercising (using) the gift of faith? You might say you believe and you have faith. But how well do your actions show it? How can you learn to use your faith daily in small things so that when big things come, you will be able to show the faith that you claim to have?



If faith is not exercised, it does not grow.

TUESDAY—APRIL 13**BELIEVING WITHOUT SEEING
(John 2:24–29)**

The depressed (sad) young officer kicked a small stone in the dry, desert sand. His mother was going to have surgery for breast cancer. The strict military operational schedule would not let him be at her side. Angrily, the officer asked, “Why? Why? Why?” He had been praying for faith. When his prayers were not answered as he had hoped, he found his faith becoming weaker. The darkness of doubt crept into his soul, and he wondered if God was real at all. Then as the sun rose, his mind went to some verses in the Bible. He remembered a story that he had known since childhood. As he thought about that story, his faith returned. It was difficult for him to understand the reasons for what had happened. But he kept on trusting and loving His Lord Jesus.

What does the story in John 20:24–29 say to you? How often do you need to believe without seeing? Why is that such an important part of what it means to exercise faith?

Jesus patiently and tenderly showed His wounds to Thomas. Then Thomas admitted, “ ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” (verse 28). The verse that impressed the young military officer’s mind was, “ ‘Blessed are those who have not seen me but still have believed’ ” (verse 29, NIV). This part was really the key—to believe without seeing;

to accept God’s Word without requiring any proof. After all, for some people, all the proof in the world will not make them believe. Living by faith is, then, going on what we already know of God’s love. It means trusting God based on what we have already experienced. It means accepting His Word because He has shown us His goodness and love, no matter how much we do not see or understand.

When was the last time you needed to act on faith without seeing? What happened? What did you learn from your experience that could help others who might have almost the same situation? If you had to do it again, what would you have done differently? Why?

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 14**THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT
EXERCISING THE BODY: PART 1
(1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)**

So far this week we have been studying what it means to exercise (use) faith. We have read some of the Bible’s examples of athletes and racing. Paul used them to talk about the Christian walk of faith.

At the same time, we have been told that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

What is Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20? How might the question of physical exercise be connected with these verses?

Our bodies are gifts from God. These gifts are not to be abused (hurt; mistreated). Science has shown us, over and over, that exercise helps almost every part of our bodies. Sure, we do not have to run four-minute miles. But in almost all cases, we can do enough exercise to help ourselves greatly, physically, mentally, and spiritually too.



Our bodies are the temples
of the Holy Spirit.

As Christians, we do not believe in the Greek idea of a separate immortal⁷ soul. We do not believe in the pagan⁸ idea that the body is somehow evil. Our minds and our bodies are both gifts from God. And they are closely related. How our bodies feel will influence⁹ how our minds feel. And that will influence how we feel spiritually too. Everything is related. And we cannot neglect any part of our bodies without influencing other parts too.

“The requirements¹⁰ of God must

hit our conscience. Men and women must wake up to the duty of keeping themselves pure and free from bad food and impure [not healthy] habits. They need to know of the fact that all their powers of mind and body are the gifts of God. These gifts are to be protected in the best possible way for His service.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 130.

Those who exercise can claim all the good things that come from it. And the good news is, you do not need to exercise a lot to be healthy.

Many people are busy, but we are commanded by God to take care of ourselves. Exercise is one important way we can do it. What about you? How much time do you spend exercising? What excuses do you use to get out of doing it?

THURSDAY—APRIL 15

THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT EXERCISING THE BODY: PART 2 (Psalm 139:13–15)

Faith needs to be exercised. So do our bodies. Before we start an exercise program, we need to be sure that our health will permit regular exercise. If there are any health problems, it is wise to follow a doctor’s orders on how much exercise we can safely do.

There are three points we need to remember about any exercise

7. immortal—never dying.

8. pagan—having to do with the worship of idols (false gods) or nature instead of God.

9. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

10. requirements—the things that are needed or demanded.

program: frequency,¹¹ intensity,¹² and duration.¹³

(1) Frequency (How often should we exercise?). Currently, the health and fitness experts suggest that we should exercise at least six times a week.

(2) Intensity (How hard should we exercise?). Exercise will depend on your age and medical condition. Over time, if you are faithful, you will be able to exercise harder and harder. It is good to get your heart beating faster and to work up a sweat. You have to pace (control) yourself. What works for one person might not work for another.

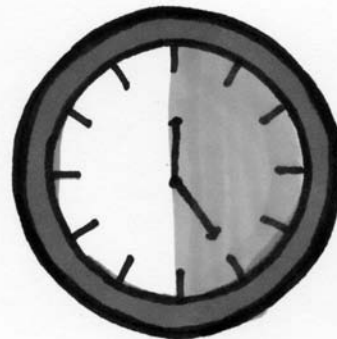
(3) Duration (How long should we exercise?). It is said that 45–90 minutes of exercise per day is great. It would be helpful to exercise for at least 30 minutes, 6 days per week. The exercise time may be divided into parts—for example, 10 minutes each morning, midday, and evening. Walking is an excellent form of exercise.

There are many proven advantages of exercise. Regular exercise helps control weight. It helps to reduce high blood pressure and is an important part of any medical therapy for high blood pressure (under a doctor's guidance). When exercise is regularly done, people are less likely to have type 2 diabetes.¹⁴ Regular exercise also improves

good cholesterol¹⁵ or HDL.

Regular exercise gives one an improved feeling (sense) of well-being. This happens partly because of chemicals called endorphins.¹⁶ The body makes endorphins during exercise. Exercise also helps to delay Alzheimer's disease.¹⁷ And it improves the mind too. People who exercise regularly have less depression (sadness). Exercise helps prevent breast and colon cancer. There are many different advantages¹⁸ of exercise that help us enjoy good health.

Read Psalm 139:13–15. Think about how wonderfully we are designed and created. Why is it so important for us to take care of our bodies? What kind of exercise program are you on? And how could you improve what you are doing?



It is good to exercise for at least 30 minutes, 6 days per week.

11. frequency—how often something happens or is done.

12. intensity—how much effort we put into something.

13. duration—how long it takes to do something.

14. diabetes—a serious disease in which the body cannot properly control the amount of sugar in the blood because it does not have enough insulin (a substance that the body makes and uses to turn sugar into energy).

15. cholesterol—a substance found in the bodies of humans (people) and animals.

16. endorphins—living chemical compounds found in the brain. Endorphins make the body feel better. Some endorphins act like medicine. These endorphins take away pain from the body.

17. Alzheimer's disease—an illness that destroys the brain cells over time. People who are ill with Alzheimer's disease can lose their memory and the power to think clearly.

18. advantages—things, events, or conditions (the way things are; a state of being) that can help a person gain what he or she wants.

FRIDAY—APRIL 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Touch of Faith,” pages 59–72, in *The Ministry of Healing*.

“The only way to grow in grace is to be doing the very work which Christ has asked us to do. We are to help and bless those who need our help the best we can. Strength comes by exercise. Being active is the very condition of life. There are those people who try to lead a Christian life by just accepting the blessings of grace and doing nothing for Christ. They are the ones who are just trying to live by eating without working. And in the spiritual and natural worlds, this always leads to decay and destruction. A man who would refuse to exercise his arms and legs would soon lose all power to use them. In the same way the Christian who will not exercise his God-given powers will fail to grow up into Christ and loses the strength that he already had.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pages 80, 81.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ What other comparisons¹⁹ can you make between exercising faith

and exercising the body? Where do the comparisons break down?

❷ Someone driving in a car saw a woman jogging. He rolled down his window and yelled, “You’re [You are] going to die, anyway!” The man might be rude, but he was right. Physical exercise is important, but no matter how physically fit we become, we must always remember that we are mortal.²⁰ The best exercise program in the world does not save us from death. Healthful living and exercise do not lead to eternal (forever; without end) life. Only faith in Jesus does. Why is it important that we always remember this fact?

❸ If possible, bring to class some of the latest scientific research findings on how important exercise is. What do the studies teach? How can we help our church better understand the value of exercise? How can you also get church members to start exercising more than they do now?

❹ Without judging anyone, look around at your church. Do people look as if they are getting plenty of exercise? Or do they look like they need to do more? What can you do to help?

19. comparisons—how things are the same.

20. mortal—not eternal (without end); can die in due time.