

Lutheran Women in Mission



Spiritually Fit by Deaconess Sylvia Johnson

Opening

Sing "Fight the Good Fight" (*LW* 299, *TLH* 447, *LBW* 461) or "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" (*All God's People Sing* 166).

Push-ups, sit-ups, walking, running, jogging. Does the list make you feel guilty as you recall what you aren't doing or does it make you feel good about the things you do on a regular basis? Whatever your reaction, you might experience a similar reaction when you look at the following list: prayer, journaling, meditation, Bible study, worship, family devotions, time alone with the Lord.

Just as good physical training will help you continue your fitness plan with achievable benchmarks, the same approach is necessary to achieve spiritual fitness. What advice does Scripture give about this in **1 Corinthians 9:24-25**?

What values does God stress in this passage?
Why is it important for us to be committed and spiritually fit?

Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are "exercises" people do to stay close to Jesus. Notice the word *discipline* looks a lot like *disciple*. Jesus' disciples are disciplined learners who live in Jesus' presence, follow Him and try to imitate the life He lived.

See **1 Corinthians 9:26-27**.

Why did Paul lead a disciplined life?
What do both of these passages in 1 Corinthians teach us about what it means to live as a disciple of Christ?

Prayer is an exercise you can take up at any time.
You don't have to enter training first.

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**.

What attitudes represent God's will for us?
How should we pray?
What value is there in giving thanks in all circumstances?



Read **Ephesians 6:18**.

How often do you pray in the Spirit (according to the Spirit's promptings and with the power of the Spirit)?

Idea: Establish a place of prayer in your home complete with the equipment needed (Bible, notebook, devotional book, reading glasses, etc.). Though you may not be able to pray at the same time every day, having a designated spot for prayer will go a long way toward reminding you of your commitment to prayer.

As we grow spiritually, God gains greater control over our entire lives and transforms us more and more into the likeness of Christ. In the midst of this process is a paradox: Our Christian walk is one of grace (undeserved love), yet certain disciplines are essential for our growth in grace. See **Philippians 2:12-13** and **Ezekiel 36:27**.

How is God challenging those to whom these passages were written?
How is God challenging you in similar ways?

Keeping a journal is a spiritual discipline that provides structure for exploring our lives—our thoughts, our feelings, our beliefs, our relationships with others and with God. It can increase our awareness of God's leading and action in our lives. If you have tried journaling, what was your experience?

Daily study of the Word allows us to encounter the living God, whose Word is *living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12).

The Holy Spirit works in us as we study the Word daily, increasing our spiritual health and productivity.

Acts 17:11.

How were the Bereans different from the Thessalonians?
What is God calling you to do through this passage—individually, as a family, in worship?

2 Timothy 3:14-17.

What are the Holy Scriptures able to do?
For what good works does the Scripture equip the person of God?

Meditation. To meditate is to focus one's thought, reflect on or ponder over. Meditating on Scripture means you give God's Word more than just passing attention. You digest it. You chew on the words to drain every drop of flavor, substance and nourishment from them as Jeremiah suggests in **Jeremiah 15:16**.

What changes does this passage challenge you to make as you meditate on the Scriptures?

Spiritual disciplines are keys to developing a stronger faith and a more resilient and joyful Christian life. When we immerse our lives in Christ's maturity, in prayer or private meditation, our lives take on the rich flavor of God's nature and grace and we become spiritually fit.

How can you make time this month to regularly pursue a spiritual discipline?

Closing

Pray together: Dear God, Thank You for helping us know You better through Your Word. Thank You for working through Your Word to make us better disciples of Jesus. Help us incorporate into our lives those spiritual disciplines that will help us know You better, trust You more completely, rest secure in Your promise to love us aLWays, and to live our lives as Christ did. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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