

Spiritual Fitness - Character

It's the miracle cure we've all been waiting for.

1. It can reduce your risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer by up to 50%
2. It can lower your risk of early death by up to 30%.
3. It helps control our weight
4. It improves our mood
5. It boosts our energy
6. It promotes better sleep
7. It puts the spark back into your sex life (for married couple only)

It's free, easy to take, has an immediate effect and you don't need a GP to get some. (with apologies to the doctors in our midst)

The miracle cure's name? Exercise.*

Despite the enormous benefits, less than half of adult Britons exercised three or more times per week according to a 2011 Gallup-Healthways survey.†

The apostle Paul reminded us in 1 Tim 4:8 that while physical training has some value, spiritual exercise (spiritual fitness) is valuable in every way, because it promises life for both the present and the future (Good News Translation).

What are some benefits of spiritual fitness? In the series on spiritual fitness, we have already heard of two: Character and Attitude.

* Adapted from NHS and Mayo Clinic website

† Phone interviews conducted by Gallup-Healthways Jan. 2-March 31, 2011, with a random sample of 3,933 adults, aged 18 and older, living in the United Kingdom

Spiritual Fitness: Character - 1 Peter 2:4-12; Hebrews 10:19-25

Warming Up

1. Congratulate yourself if you exercise regularly and derive all the benefits listed above. If you do not, what prevents you from physical exercise?
2. What are some examples of spiritual exercises?

Into the Passage

*Read Matthew 13:18-23- The Parable of the Sower
(Attitude in responding to God's Word)*

3. Same sower, same seed but different types of soil. Which soil reflects the condition of our heart now? Can the condition of the soil change?
4. What distinguishes the good soil from the poor soil?

*Read Luke 6:46-49 – The wise and the foolish builders
(Attitude in building our lives)*

5. What does Jesus tell us how we should build our lives?
6. The passage tells of severe testing with two contrasting outcomes. What is one issue of obedience that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit is asking us to heed?

*Read Philippians 2:5-8 – Imitating Christ's humility
(How perfect attitude looks like)*

7. Paul calls us to rethink our attitude based on Christ's attitude (v6) and how Jesus' attitude led Him to lay down His 'rights'. Reflect on our own attitude and the 'rights' we assert to live the kind of lives we want to.

Moving Forward

It is fitting that our studies end with the example of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. Our attitude does not require a Band-Aid plaster but a major transplant. The great news is that the divine exchange occurred at the cross of Jesus. Here lies the paradox – if the exchange has been transacted, why is our attitude still rotten?

8. Recognizing the bankruptcy of our soul and the richness of God is a life-long process and make us come to the cross of Jesus humbly to receive grace. Acknowledge our need before Him today.

Life Together

Living in community is not just a good idea, it is a God idea. Spiritual training like loving one another, serving each other and the community, and allowing others to help shape us like iron sharpens iron, best happen in a community.

9. In Revelations 2 and 3, we read about our King reminded His people living in 7 different communities. Some communities received praise whereas some communities received warning.

Which communities had the better attitude?

Determine to help build a community that will receive praise when we meet Jesus face-to-face.

Leader's Guide : Spiritual Fitness - Character

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

Into the Passage

*Read Matthew 13:18-23- The Parable of the Sower
(Attitude in responding to God's Word)*

3. Same sower, same seed but different types of soil. Which soil reflects the condition of our heart now? Can the condition of the soil change?

The passage is suggestive that the hearers have a role in how they respond to the message of the Kingdom. We are to ask God for spiritual understanding and the grace to obey. One practical application is exactly what we are doing now – studying the Word like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) not just to understand but to obey

4. What distinguishes the good soil from the poor soil?

Fruitfulness. From the passage, a single seed produced a crop. The context of the passage suggests that a single believer goes on to spread the message of the Kingdom, leading many more to the Lord.

*Read Luke 6:46-49 – The wise and the foolish builders
(Attitude in building our lives)*

5. What does Jesus tell us how we should build our lives?

Long term obedience. We obey, God build.

6. The passage tells of severe testing with two contrasting outcomes. What is one issue of obedience that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit is asking us to heed?

This is a very sobering passage in that the testing is so severe that our very foundation will be shaken. Equally sobering is that the man who built foolishly witnessed the collapse of his house.

*Read Philippians 2:5-8 – Imitating Christ's humility
(How perfect attitude looks like)*

7. Paul calls us to rethink our attitude based on Christ's attitude (v6) and how Jesus' attitude led Him to lay down His 'rights'. Reflect on our own attitude and the 'rights' we assert to live the kind of lives we want to.

Our change always starts with God. When we see the glorious Jesus laying down His divine rights, then our laying down seems insignificant by comparison. When we see the Creator clothed in humanity with humility, we are thankful.