



Christian Life Fellowship
Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Fit for Life - Spiritually

January 6, 2008

Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

Usually at the start of a new year, most people make at least one or two resolutions. These are goals they hope to accomplish, projects they desire to complete or maybe a new determination to be more consistent in doing or not doing something.

The beginning of the year is always a great time to work on getting fit. That is what we are going to focus on this month. Today we are going to look at getting fit spiritually. Next week we are going to look at getting fit intellectually. We will also look at getting fit physically and getting fit financially. Each of these areas impact the way we function as followers of Jesus Christ, so let's plan together to get fit and strengthen ourselves so we can be more effective for God and His kingdom.

As we start this series let me ask you three questions. *What* does it mean to be fit? *How* do we become fit? *How* do we stay fit once we have become fit?

The best way I can describe being fit to you is to share with you definitions from the dictionary. To be fit means: to be suitable for, to conform correctly to the shape or size, to adjust until correctly in place, to make room for or accommodate, to be in agreement with, to put into a condition of readiness.

From this definition, I understand that to become fit means there may have to be some adjustment. There may have to be some changes in order for the conforming or accommodation to work. To become fit means I have to conform, adjust, accommodate, get myself ready. I do that through disciplines that help me become as strong, as in shape as I possibly can. Once I get there, I can stay in that place of fitness by working out, continuing the disciplines that helped me get fit.

There are seven practices that are important for every believer. Being faithful in prayer. Reading and studying God's Word daily. Sharing the message of Christ with nonbelievers. Depending on the Spirit in daily life. Continuing to grow and disciple others. Supporting missions. Serving the poor and suffering. All of these practices help develop our spiritual being and help to keep us spiritually healthy and strong.

We can be followers of Christ. We can be born again. However, if we are going to enjoy spiritual health then the things that make us spiritually fit are the things we need to be practicing. One of those areas that I am going to focus on this morning is prayer. Prayer is at the core of all these other practices happening in our lives. If we neglect prayer, as good as the other practices are, we will be spiritually unhealthy.

So let's begin at the core of our being this morning and focus on getting fit spiritually. This week we are going to be focusing on prayer. All throughout the week there will be prayer meetings and opportunities for you to use prayer as a tool to become better spiritually fit. Seize the opportunities. Don't let them pass you by. I promise you that if you practice using this tool of prayer, not just this week at the start of 2008, but throughout this year, you will be in better spiritual shape and more spiritually fit than you are today.

Prayer develops several areas of our spiritual life.

- Prayer exercises the faith and trust we have in God and His Word.
- Prayer helps us with our focus on God as the source of our strength, supply, forgiveness, joy, love, peace, and everything we need.
- Prayer keeps us humble, by acknowledging our dependence on God.
- Prayer develops within us a grateful heart.
- Prayer permits us to apply the truth of God's Word to our lives.

I. He wants to hear our prayers.

Our text this morning is taken from the Old Testament where we read these words in:

2 Chron. 7:14 - 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 from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

If we are going to be spiritually fit, we have to call on Him. One of the things that God really despises is pride. The letter "I" is right at the center of pride. Pride was the heart position of Satan before he was cast out of heaven: I will be like the most high. I will exalt myself.

Pride can be wrapped up in self-reliance. I can do such a good job by myself that I don't need God's help. We trust in ourselves instead of God. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So one of the benefits of getting in shape through prayer is dealing with pride and developing a humble heart.

Jeremiah 29:12 - Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

II. He wants us to seek His face.

So often we just want to have a hand-out. God do this, God do that. Justin, my son, recently adopted a rescued dog from a local shelter. It is so amazing how that dog seeks the face of his master. When someone comes near, he is looking at their face, looking intently into their eyes, seeking to know

Here are three statements of fact that are promised if we meet the conditions that come before them. Our text begins with IF - The word "if" can have several meanings attached to it. It can mean in the event that, allowing that, on the assumption that or on condition that.

The text indicates that God wants to hear us; He wants to forgive us and He wants to heal us.

them and watch every expression, whether it be of pleasure or sadness, of joy or disapproval. If that is so with a pet, how much more should it be with our Creator.

Prayer is an avenue of seeking His face. When seeking His face, we do so to catch a glimpse of His expression and response to us, whether it is one of joy, sorrow, disappointment or pleasure. God's Word indicates that to be spiritually fit, we have to humble ourselves and pray. We like to handle things ourselves. We like to be independent. We like to do things on our own. When something is broken, we like to fix it. Making things happen often gives us a feeling that we are in control.

Jeremiah 29:13 - You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

III. He wants us to turn from wicked ways.

Notice that our text references "my people". That means those who belong to Him. This is not referring to those who do not follow or know God; this is specifically referring to God's people. Those who are called by His name – Christians, followers of

His, those who have been redeemed, adopted into His family.

What wicked ways do God's people have to deal with? We have to deal with missing the mark, grief, distress, trouble, fear, disbelief. Turn from those things. That is something we have to do. To turn away is an act of our will. It is through prayer we can come to the place of abandonment. Once we meet the conditions, then He promises to respond to us in these ways.

A. I will hear from heaven.

I think it is awesome when we can be sure that God hears us. I know with both our sons, there was something about their cry that was indelibly marked on my brain. When I would go to sleep at night, if they would cry out in the night, it would cut through my drowsiness and my dreams. It was a call and I would hear it.

So it is with God. When we as His people, meet the conditions to be spiritually fit, then God hears from heaven. No matter what else He is giving His attention to, no matter how pressing something else might be, when we cry out to Him, He hears us. God has promised to hear from His people who have dealt with pride and humbled themselves. We must seek His face to know His pleasure or displeasure, to understand what disappoints Him or brings Him joy, and also to willfully turn from wickedness.

Conclusion:

To be spiritually fit includes seeking God in prayer. Prayer is the place where we develop our relationship with God and where we deal with issues about self.

“Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be the miracle.”
1835-1893- Phillips Brooks

B. I will forgive their sin.

Forgiveness of sin is something that we have to receive from our Lord. We cannot absolve ourselves nor can we cleanse each other from sin. There is only one fount that can cleanse and purify us from sin and its stronghold in our lives and that is the blood of Jesus Christ.

To pray is multifaceted. When we pray, we acknowledge our dependence on God. We seek His will in the situation. We trust Him to do what is best. We acknowledge our need of Him. We exercise our faith in His ability and power.

C. I will heal their land.

Healing of the land is important. To heal means to cure or make whole. One of the names of God is Jehovah Rapha – the God who heals or makes you whole. He responds to make whole when we seek Him in prayer. So to be spiritually fit means among other things that I spend time in prayer. It also means that I communicate with God, that I humble myself, seek His face and willfully turn from my wicked ways.