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# USE IT OR LOSE IT

What are you working on in your life?

Are you dreaming about being different or putting in the work? Describe the actual work...

What is your goal that you are pursuing by following Jesus? How do God's promises fit with that goal?

**2 Corinthians 6:1** – As we work together with Him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

## I) **Train With a Partner...**

When we want to change something in our lives, often we need someone's help. We might need an expert to show us how to change effectively. In some cases, we need resources we don't have. Often, we need accountability. Partners are invaluable as we break old habits and create new ones. We have a greater chance of success living like Jesus with the support of Christian friends. Not just friends, but partners. Some of us know more than others about how to do it, but none know it perfectly. The person we need is the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would work with us. His appointment list is open. Choose to train with a partner and get results.

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♦ **Healthy lifestyle:** A healthy lifestyle is active. Movement, nutrition, thinking, learning. Other than proper sleep, there is not much that benefits our health in passivity. This is true for our physical, emotional, and mental health. It's true for our spiritual health, too. "As we work... (2 Corinthians 6:1)," is God's way of being direct about it. Becoming like Jesus—calm, patient, joyful, etc.—takes decisions that produce action. We all know one week of an exercise regime, diet, or class does not change us. Neither does a one-time choice to accept Jesus that quickly fades into just another failed attempt to change ourselves.

♦ **Personal trainer:** That's the value of a partner, especially a professional. They know what to do. They have access to the resources to do it. They are immune to our complaining, too. Their mission is to deliver results. The Holy Spirit is the best personal trainer for our spiritual formation. Working "together with Him (v1)," we have the plan, power, and personal accountability to become the person we desire to be. We won't waste time on useless activity, hurt ourselves with the wrong equipment, or be left alone when we feel lazy.

## II) Use a Dynamic Routine...

Another dimension of a healthy lifestyle is variation. Effective exercise programs vary the moves, intensity, and duration. Good nutrition uses many ingredients. Mental sharpness takes diverse modes of thought. We should also use a dynamic routine for our spiritual health. If we accept that all of life has a spiritual aspect, we benefit from the infinite variety of situations we confront. Each one serves a purpose in our formation if we listen to our trainer and apply ourselves accordingly.

♦ **Professional advice:** God instructed us in everything necessary for basic salvation in the Gospel. God's promises extend beyond the basics of heart healing. He offers to strengthen us so we can thrive in a harsh world. "We urge you (v1)," to go further. This is how personal trainers communicate. They respect our agency, strongly suggesting what they know we need but not demanding it. But we know that if we ignore this professional advice, we alone are responsible for wasting our time and effort without the results we want.

♦ **Multiple moves:** We are multidimensional in every regard. We move in three dimensions, think across domains, feel many emotions at varied intensity. No part of us will be healthy without multiple moves to develop and maintain all of these. Our trainer urges us to work on prayer and "also (v1)," reflection. Praise and devotion. Generosity and patience. We are tempted to go through the motions by adding one move to our current routine. We can put a piece of lettuce on the plate with the meat and potatoes. It won't change our heart health.

## III) Focus on Results...

Excellent trainers don't want to waste their own time and talent. Many want the results other clients have achieved but without the work. It's as if the trainer is a magician working upon the client. Excellent trainers choose clients who focus on results, knowing what they want and having the determination to develop a lifestyle that creates it. We cannot be transformed from the outside. It comes from the inside, and it starts with the desperate desire to change. Then, and only then, will the professional advice be put to productive use.

♦ **Set a clear goal:** There are many definitions of health. Wanting to be healthy, or fit, is too vague to reform one's life. This is the kind of desire that leads to quitting because whatever healthy or fit means, it isn't achieved. God wants us to set a clear goal and "not to accept (v1)," whatever we might be tomorrow as good enough. For example, is it satisfying to try to be kind, or to become kind? Are we content never becoming gentle if we stop giving into rage? Do we want to be not so bad, or the person we want to be?

♦ **Make the mark:** It is our responsibility to nurture the desire to become our personal version of Jesus. To let it grow, capture our imagination, overwhelm our heart. To finally move from wanting change to making change. Until then, we risk wasting "the grace of God in vain (v1)." Booking time with the Holy Spirit only to avoid the work, make excuses, deny that we ever had access to divine power. However, if we work together with Him, following the program to the best of our ability, we are certain to achieve our dream. Divine power...use it or lose it.

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