



A Voice From The Wilderness



Vitality - even the word is invigorating! Are you experiencing vitality in your Christian walk? Are you experiencing it in your personal health? Or do you find yourself physically tired and dragging, with a corresponding lethargy in your Christian experience?

For years this ministry has shared a very simple, yet practical, gospel. We have continued to focus on how the gospel works in our daily lives in this very fast-paced, harsh world that we live in.

In this article, I will discuss very simply and personally how the gospel has affected decisions for improving my physical health, and how those decisions have brought renewed strength and vitality to my whole experience. For several years I have practiced regular personalized exercise, tuned in to my body's needs for what, when, how fast, and how much I eat, along with other healthful choices I will share. As a result,

I am convinced that optimum physical health definitely promotes optimum spiritual health. We live in a tough world, and we need all the help we can get to encourage our full cooperation with Christ in fighting the battles we face daily.

The desire of God for every human being is expressed in the words **"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health,** even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John 2.

The Lord knows the strong link between body, mind, and soul. He wants our physical bodies to prosper and be in health as well as our souls. Certainly this does not mean that our souls can't prosper if we have some crippling disease or paralysis. But too many of us for too long have allowed the busyness of life, circumstances, and plain old laziness to erode away physical strength and health, which has had a corresponding effect upon real, practical Christianity.

There are many men and women today preaching or espousing truth who are allowing their physical bodies to deteriorate. Some are overweight and in poor physical condition while trying to convince people that they have a transforming gospel. There are many others who call themselves health reformers who are gaunt, pale, and sickly, and do not attractively represent true principles of health reform or draw others to Christ.

Do we fulfill the Lord's "**wish above all things**" that we prosper and be in health when we are overweight, out of shape, gaunt, pale, and sickly? Friends, this is not a personal attack. It's present reality. So, what are we willing to do about it? Are we truly willing to cooperate with God and recognize the importance of our health and the fitness of our bodies as a part of His purpose for us?

Several years ago I found myself laid flat in bed with a herniated disc in my lumbar spine. My doctor told me that, along with the treatments I was receiving, I would have to walk four miles a day to build up strength and avoid back surgery. I tried to explain to the doctor that I didn't have time to walk four miles every day. He seemed quite untouched by my plea and simply told me **I would find time** to walk four miles a day if I wanted to avoid surgery.

And I did! Why? Because I found sufficient motivation. I wanted to have my health again, and I didn't want surgery. Within a short time I was not only finding the benefit for my back, but I came home telling my family of the other benefits I was experiencing. My mind was getting more clear, my attitude was improving, I was more prepared to face the day, and I felt invigorated and less tired, even though I was rising at 4:30 a.m. to accomplish it.

Then Alane started walking with me, and she also began experiencing the blessings. We would walk together early in the morning, enjoying the silence and solitude that we have seldom found in other places.

After realizing the benefits of vigorous walking - I mean working up a sweat, not a casual stroll - and feeling some of that increased **vitality**, we were determined to make it a consistent addition to our day. This became our habit for a couple of years. But as the weather patterns began to

change, so did the conditions. More ice in the winter made it increasingly difficult to walk without falling. Then our springs became more muddy, making our feet heavy with clay. Our routine was changing with these conditions.

So we decided to purchase a walking machine called the FasTrak II. I found that I could put my ear plugs in, tune out the world, lock into a steady pace, and then begin talking with the Lord. Often I would get on and say, "Good morning Lord, it's good to be back." My mind wasn't focused on counting the minutes, but in communing with

the Lord - a true blessing. Along with the walking, I would do sit-ups, pushups, and jumping jacks. The sit-ups helped to strengthen my lower back. The jumping jacks provided good circulation for the lymphatic system, which needs vigorous motion because it does not have a circulating pump like the blood does.

We're told that "**walking**, in all cases where it is possible, is the best remedy for diseased bodies, because in this exercise **all** the organs of the body are brought into use... There is no exercise that can take the place of walking." (Counsels on Health

p. 200) This is not to say that walking is the only exercise, or that exercise should be limited only to walking. Walking is particularly good because "all the organs of the body are brought into use." It's also an inexpensive, readily available, anywhere-you-are kind of general body exercise.

Our whole family is committed to better health as a part of cooperating with God to be all that we can be for Him. Our program for health and fitness is an important part of experiencing the vitality that God wants His people to have. Like the Christian experience, we continue to learn what works well for each of us in what we eat, how much we eat, how hard we exercise, what specific exercise we do, and so on. We presently are using a treadmill for our vigorous cardiovascular exercise, and then specific exercises targeted to bring balance to all the basic muscle groups.

I feel great! That's really the reason I'm writing this article today. I know what benefits I've gained and how they have affected my body, mind, and soul. Because this has become a practical part of my walk with Christ, **I want you to experience the blessings too!**

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Many times Alane and my youth have heard me describe how I feel after I exercise with statements like: "I feel like a million bucks," "I have more stamina now than I did in my twenties," or, "I feel so invigorated!" Those are expressions of vitality, and they exude from the blessing of cooperating in simple ways with the Lord.

So let me share some simple, yet effective things I have found to **improve vitality**. Now, I am not intending to convey that, just because they work for me, they will automatically work the same for you, or that what I'm doing is the program for you. I'm simply sharing from my personal experience.

Water is a marvelous blessing from God, especially when it comes from a pure mountain spring. I drink a quart of water when I rise in the morning. I find it hydrates the system, and flushes impurities. It also seems to get my mind working more clearly. No one else in my family drinks that much, but they each have at least two glasses before our first meal.

Water is great on the inside and on the outside. It has been my custom for many years to end my shower on full cold. This is **truly** an **invigorating** experience— at least where we live! For years I was personally convinced that this practice added strength to my immune system's arsenal. One of my friends who is a physician told me that research has proven that the cold contrast after the hot greatly enhances the white blood cell forces which fight against the body's many invading foes. It took a few years of my influence (example and good results are good motivators), but now the rest of my family also end with cold showers. Yes, even my dear wife.

Some simple but beneficial changes in eating have added to our vitality as well. We have found that eating our heavier, main meal in the morning has helped us in several ways. Metabolically - that is, in terms of the body's breakdown and utilization of what we eat - we're digesting the heavier meal better and utilizing it more efficiently. You see, the body is much more ready and able to handle the food at the beginning of the day. If the same meal is eaten at 5:00 or 6:00 in the evening, when the body's utilization of the food is slowing down, then guess what happens?

The body stores the calories more efficiently as **fat**, and digestion as a whole is more sluggish. So the same calories eaten in the morning are burned much better than in the evening. It really makes sense when you think about it.

Also, for people like me who more easily produce the bad kind of cholesterol, just switching the heavier vegetable meal from the afternoon to the morning drops the bad cholesterol numbers. It is not that we don't do anything else. But that, alone, brings positive change, provided we are eating proper foods.

Eating raw fruits and vegetables first, before eating other food served at meals, also has proven to be a digestive blessing. We avoid mixing everything together or eating the salads and vegetables last. We eat a lot more raw foods that way, which translates to consumption of more whole nutritious foods and less calories overall.

It is also important to decide what foods work well for you and what things don't set well - what combinations you personally need to avoid, and what constitutes good

nutrition and balance for you. Have you determined what foods agree with your system? This requires a willingness to be sensitive to the Lord and honest with yourself, while at the same time not becoming the criteria for someone else. If onions or nuts don't work well for me in the afternoon, I don't urge others to conform. Don't make your personal experience or preferences the criteria for others, and then push for their conformity. This in itself causes great digestive problems!

There is wisdom and blessing, both spiritually and physically, in using in moderation what is good and abstaining entirely from that which is harmful. Reading the ingredients label may seem picky to some, but we have found the blessing in responding when the Spirit urges us to abstain from the harmful. It also helps us to focus more on the simple, healthful foods.

Being out in the fresh air daily, and sunshine whenever it is available, improves circulation and brings fresh oxygen to our brains. We think more clearly and feel much better when we get out of doors. This is especially important for those who struggle with negative thoughts or depression.

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Retiring at a regular and reasonable time in the evening makes it much easier to get up in the morning and begin the day right with God. Too often, when people go to bed late, they get up late, or just in time to get into their day, leaving out time for communion and connection with God, who longs to pilot us through the day. Adequate rest is vitally important to our vitality. It is the time when the organs are resting from their regular use, and when they can repair and rebuild if necessary.

Because we travel so much and come in contact with so much sickness and various “bugs,” we continue to learn other ways to build up the immune system. Three days before we go out for a family campmeeting, we start juicing carrots, and then again for three days after we return. We also take a high quality, food-grown Vitamin C and a concentrated form of garlic called Garlinase 4000 in a tablet form, along with other simple but effective personalized formulas.

The last area I’ll share with you that has greatly improved my vitality is how I’m learning to deal with stress. “Stress” is just what the word implies. It may be a person, a circumstance, or even an expectation that places a pressure on us, or at least is perceived as a pressure. Although we may greatly reduce our potential stress, as long as we live in this world we will be put in situations that put pressure or stress upon us. It’s how we relate to the stress and whether our dependence is upon Christ that determines whether we “**get stressed out**” or “**get the stress out.**”

I’ve learned that, when I’m feeling stressed, it is usually because I am trying to meet other people’s expectations without consulting the Lord. Or I’m trying to manage things my way, in my strength, apart from the Lord – not necessarily because I’ve chosen against the Lord, but because of the natural bent we have to slip back into self-management. On the other hand, when I face the same stress while being aware of the Lord, consulting Him, trusting Him, and resting in Him, **He takes the pressure** which I would normally internalize, and the stress of the situation is transferred to Him. Only as I am truly surrendered to Christ do I experience the “peace,” as the apostle Paul says, “which passeth all understanding.” (Phil.4:7)

I’ve shared a little of what has added to the vitality of my experience. I’ve truly never felt better. In fact, over the last six years I haven’t experienced the typical colds, flu,

and sore throats that I used to. I’ve had one serious cold with fever that lasted about five days and one chest congestion with only minor symptoms. I’m not sharing this to lift myself up (I could get sick tomorrow). I only want to encourage you that there are tangible benefits in cooperating with the Lord in balanced exercise and overall health, especially since **most Christians neglect vigorous exercise** more than any other area of God’s laws of health.

Friends, do you want to have more **vitality**? Do you want to feel better than you’re feeling now? Do you want more vibrant health for your body, your mind, and your soul? The challenge here is not to grit your teeth and determine to implement a program. Rather ask, “Lord, what would you have me do?” This aspect of our lives requires the same surrender and receiving of divine power as any other area. Without Christ, true success and vitality will never be found.

I’m challenging each of you to try an invigorating exercise program for just one week. Get up a half-hour earlier and take a brisk walk, jog, or ride your bicycle. You choose the exercise, but **do something** vigorous! Do it for seven days, and you will feel more **vitality**! Then personalize it, adjust it, and stick with it as a part of God’s plan for your health and happiness.

Everyone here at Restoration International has a commitment to developing body, mind, and soul. We are all actively involved in personalized overall health and fitness programs as a part of cooperating with **the Lord’s desire** for us “**to prosper and be in health**, even as thy soul prospereth.”

I pray that you, too, have been motivated and stimulated to answer His same desire for your life. May God bless each of us as we take hold of His strength to rise to new heights of **vitality**!

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