



We all understand that physical fitness is attained through good nutrition to be healthy; through exercise to build strength and resistance, and this requires from us much commitment, discipline, perseverance and endurance to achieve the desired results.

Interestingly, our spiritual fitness is also based on the same principles, which requires all the same elements, so as to follow Christ. Our main life focus should be as Jesus commanded us in Mat 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Why? "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:10)

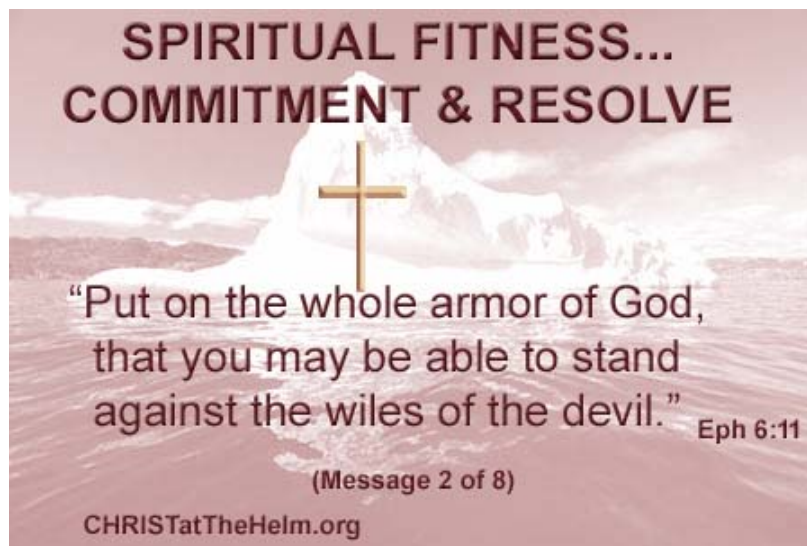
For what purpose? Because as Jesus said in Mat 5:16, we must, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

That obviously requires much commitment and resolve, so we can say like Paul in 2Tim 4:7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day."

Have we set our hearts on spiritual fitness for the New Year, 2022?

Wishing you a Blessed and Spiritually Prosperous New Year!

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Military personnel going into combat are always fully dressed, have both their defensive and offensive weapons ready, and always are on the lookout, ready in the event of enemy attack even from hidden sources.

Why? Simply because in war, we must always be ready and well equipped in order to win over the enemy.

In the same vein, spiritual warfare cannot be carried out without putting on the armor of God, as Paul describes in Ephesians 6. That's why in Rom 12:2 he said, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." In other words, let's not be drawn and deceived by the world.

Pro 16:3 says, "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established." Then James 4:8 add, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded."

In essence, we must be committed to God and Christ with military attitude and resolve. The reason why Pro 3:7-8 says, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

As believers, are we committed to put on the whole Armor of God?

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It is obvious that we will never be able to win spiritual battles in the flesh, as it is exactly that aspect of our lives that draws us away from God.

So then, what is our solution? James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” In essence, we must come to God for strength rather than be deceived and fooled by the world.

Why? Psalm 73:26 tells us, “My flesh and my heart fail; *But God is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

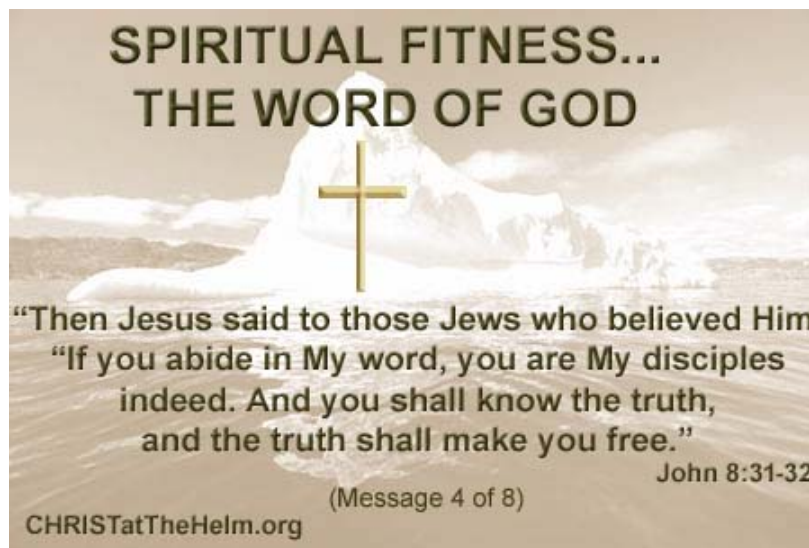
Jesus said in Mat 11:28-30; “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

In Mark 9:23 Jesus added, “If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.” The reason Paul in Philippians 4:13 confirmed, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

As a result, we can say like the Psalmist, “*It is* God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the *feet of* deer, and sets me on my high places. He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.”

Will we trust God?

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The one and only reliable source of knowledge of God is found in His Word, the Bible.

Why? "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb 4:12)

The Word of God allows us to know who God is, what He requires from us, and how we can be victorious and live by His will without being deceived by false prophets. The reason Paul said in 1 Tim 4:6: "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed."

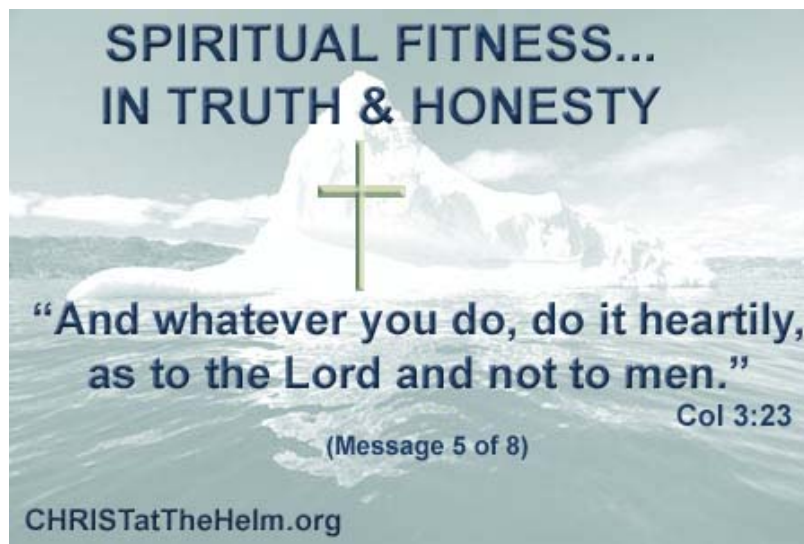
2Peter 3:18 add, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Common sense tells us to educate ourselves so we can live successfully in this life. Then, isn't it obvious that we must also educate ourselves spiritually through God's Word for the eternal life to come?

Proverbs 4:20-22 says, "My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; for they *are* life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh."

When's the last time we studied God's Word?

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Interestingly, the Christian faith should never be for profit, recognition or popularity; rather it is to serve God in truth, period!

Paul in 2Cor 13:5-6 said: “Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.” In reality, this challenges us to test ourselves as to whether our faith is in words only, or if we put our hearts and actions where our mouth is?

In 1Samuel 16:7 we are taught that, “For *the LORD* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

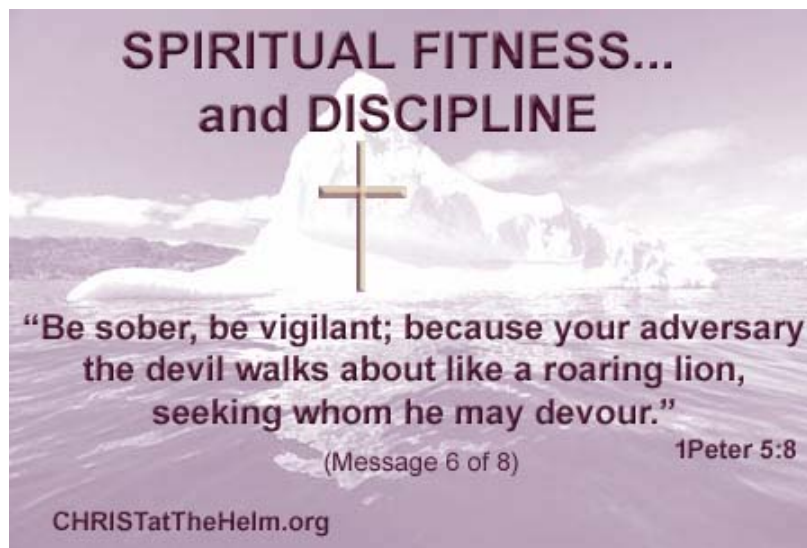
Solomon warned us, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.”

Peter crowned the issue this way: “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel; rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” (1Peter 3:3-4)

Let’s remember Jesus’ words, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32).

Are we true to our faith in belief and action, and live as we profess to believe in Christ?

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Just as in physical fitness, spiritual fitness requires discipline. I must confess that I don't always feel motivated to go to the gym regularly for physical exercise, but because I know its benefits, I discipline myself to go, desire or not.

In the same manner, we must discipline ourselves to seek and follow God through His Word, and realize that we must live in accordance to His will and follow the path of righteousness, as opposed to letting ourselves be influenced by the world's attitudes that lead to sin.

The apostle Paul gave us a clear representation of physical discipline as related to spiritual fitness in 1Cor 9:25; "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."

In all truth, if we really believe in Christ our Savior, we must as well believe in and apply His teachings to our lives, and yes, that requires consistent discipline.

Thankfully, we have an exemplary leader who showed us how, as Paul said in Heb 4:15, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin."

Are we committed to follow Christ, and will we discipline ourselves to be His witnesses in this world?

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As Christians, we do face trials and challenges that have the propensity to discourage us at times.

Here's what Jesus said on this; "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Paul in Philip 3:13-14 said, "I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." In essence, we live in this world in preparation for our eternal destination of the Kingdom of God.

How then can we grow in our faith and persevere? "For this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." (2Peter 1:5-7)

Why? "That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,... holding fast the Word of life, so that we may rejoice in the day of Christ that we have not run in vain or labored in vain." (Philip 2:16)

How determined are we to persevere and endure?

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As believers, what are the rules to receive the crown of life in Christ?

1Cor 9:25: “Everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable crown.”

Heb 6:12: “Do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Philip 4:6-7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

1Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

1Thess 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”

Heb 10:25: “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Heb 4:12: “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Are we committed, trusting God, studying His Word, honest and disciplined to endure to the end?

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