

To say that our nation is caught up in a fitness craze is an understatement. Physical fitness has become a billion-dollar business in the United States and it continues to grow. At any given time, you can find the latest “infomercial” on television featuring the latest fitness product on the market. I especially like the creative names of fitness equipment. For example: *“The Thigh Master” -- “The Abdominizer” -- “The Gut-Be-Gone.”*

Most of the fitness products also come with a training video ... but wait! There’s more! *If you order now, we’ll send you free our latest training videos on: “Abs of Steel” and “Buns of Steel”.* And for our first fifty orders we’ll also include “The Elvis Presley Guide to Nutrition: The Later Years”.

Whether it’s *“Sweatin’ to the Oldies”* with Richard Simmons or Billy Joe Jim-Bob’s *“Country Line Aerobics”*, they all promise the same thing: **If you’ll follow their training plan, you can be physically fit in a matter of days.** And just when you think you’ve seen it all ... While flying to Florida after Christmas, I was flipping through the “Sky Mall” catalogue when I noticed a picture of a man hooked up to several electrodes on various muscles on his body. The advertisement stated that gyms and fitness centers are a thing of the past. All you need to do now is to hook up to the various electrodes that would send an electric current to stimulate the muscles and work them out while you do your work.

**Most who know the basics of being physically fit.** It takes developing a personalized regular routine and staying with it. And it’s certainly not as complicated as all the “infomercials” make it out to be. **In fact the US government has gone back to the basic understanding of a well-balanced diet of vegetables, starch, and protein and they say:**

1. *Eat a Balanced Diet to Maintain Energy.*
2. *Regularly Exercise to Build Muscular & Cardiovascular Systems.*
3. *Get Proper Rest to Recharge Yourself.*

Our Gospel Reading today says after Jesus was tested by the devil in the wilderness, after he fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. And the GREAT TESTER approached him and said to him: *“If you are the Son of God, say these stones become bread.” But he answered and said: “it is written: ‘Not by bread alone shall a man live, but by every WORD coming forth through the mouth of God.’”*

**It is here that we find Jesus taking his turn in the fitness infomercials with Satan.** He is no longer worried about his physical body and he is not going to let Satan have any control of his physical hunger. So, instead he makes a total turn in the SCENE when he says... *“not by bread alone shall a man live, but by every WORD coming forth through the mouth of god.”*

**In other words, it’s good to be physically fit, BUT RIGHT NOW it’s even better to be SPIRITUALLY FIT.**

**But just how do you get spiritually fit?** Funny, but I haven’t seen too many “infomercials” on spiritual fitness. Hey, who knows? Maybe we’re on to something here! We could develop some training videos on spiritual fitness: *“Prayers of Steel” --- “Sermons of Brimstone.”*

**What does it mean to be “Spiritually Fit”?** And how do you get there? Well, I don’t think it’s that difficult. In fact, I would like to suggest a very simple approach. And although I don’t plan on developing an “infomercial” any time soon, *I think the following three steps can help you get spiritually fit.*

## **WHAT ARE THESE (3) STEPS TO SPIRITUAL FITNESS?**

### **(1) Spiritual Fitness Requires the proper SPIRITUAL NUTRITION.**

Just as the body needs the proper daily nourishment of food, spiritual fitness requires the proper daily nourishment of spiritual food. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus stated:

4 "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every **WORD** that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:4

In other words, man is more than just a physical being. He is a spiritual being as well as a physical being. And just as the physical side of him needs nourishment, so does the spiritual nature.

In the Old Testament there is a story about how God miraculously provided food for the Israelites during their forty year journey from their slavery in Egypt to their entering the promised land.

11The LORD said to Moses, 12"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.' "

**Jesus Says:**

- (1) "I am the bread (manna) of life that came down from heaven."
- (2) Whoever consumes this bread will live forever.
- (3) This bread is Christ's Body which is given to save the world from their sins.

"How do you 'consume' Jesus, the Bread of Life?"

1. By believing in his death, burial & resurrection ... that He is God who came down from heaven.
2. By inviting Christ into your life (Partaking in his Body – Communion).
3. By daily reading His Word the Bible.

All three of these points are vital, but it's this third aspect that I want to focus on concerning Spiritual Nourishment.

**One of, if not the greatest step to get yourself spiritually fit is to learn to feed yourself on God's Word, the Bible.**

**I would like to submit to you that reading God's word and combining it with faith is food for the soul!**

It's better than Oprah, Rosie, Jay Leno, David Letterman and Jerry Springer all put together! It's better than a Hallelujah Romance Novel! It's better than a John Grisham Classic! You can surf the internet ... You can surf the oceans waves, **but you will never find anything better as food for your soul than the Bible**, The Word of the Living God!

When You're Down It'll Lift You Up!

When You're Lost It'll Help You Find Your Way!

When You're Fearful It'll Give You Courage!

When You're Weak It'll Give You Strength!

When You're Hurting It'll Give You Healing!

Application: In order to experience proper growth, you must regularly read God's Word and listen to his voice.

**BUT SPIRITUAL FITNESS DOESN'T STOP THERE...**

**(2) Spiritual Fitness Requires Regular SPIRITUAL EXERCISE.**

Faith is like a muscle; it must be utilized and exercised for it to grow. *How do you exercise your "FAITH MUSCLES"?*

A small boy riding a bus home from Sunday school was very proud of the card he had received, which had a picture and a caption that read: "Have Faith in God." Then to his dismay the card slipped from his hand and fluttered out the window. "Stop the bus!" he cried. *"I've lost my 'faith in God!'"* The driver pulled the bus to a stop, and as the lad climbed out and went to retrieve his card, one of the adult riders smiled and made a comment about the innocence of youth. A more perceptive adult observed, *"All of us would be better off if we were that concerned about our faith."*

**BUT SPIRITUAL FITNESS DOESN'T STOP THERE...**

**(3) Spiritual Fitness Requires just the right SPIRITUAL CLOTHING.**

The world is a challenging place today. Satan is everywhere trying to get you to walk with him and tempting you to walk away from God's Word. But we need to use God's WORD/NUTRITION & OUR FAITH IN ORDER TO DRESS RIGHT.

You will recall that every time Clark Kent transformed himself into Superman, he would go into a telephone booth and strip off his ordinary business suit, revealing his official Superman costume. He could only stop locomotives and

lift skyscrapers when he was properly **clothed** in the outfit that revealed his true identity. *As Christians, we can do no mighty deed unless we are properly clothed with the Spirit of God*, which discloses our true **spiritual** selves and supplies the power to do wondrous things.

There was a man huddled on the cabin floor who was slowly freezing to death. He was high in the Rockies of Alberta, and outside a blizzard raged. John Elliott had logged miles that day through the deep snows of the mountain passes. As he checked for avalanches and as dusk and exhaustion overcame him, he had decided to "hole-up." He made it slowly to his cabin but somewhat dazed with fatigue, he did not light a fire or remove his wet **clothing**. As the blizzard blasted through the cracks in the old cabin walls, the sleeping forest ranger sank into darkness, paralyzed by the pleasure of the storm's icy caress. Suddenly, however, his dog sprang into action, and with unrelenting whines, finally managed to awaken his near-comatose friend. The dog was John's constant companion, a St. Bernard, one of a long line of dogs' famous for their heroics in times of crisis. *"If that dog hadn't been with me, I'd be dead today,"* John Elliott says. *"When you are "wrapped" in FREEZING-AIR and near death you actually feel warm all over, and don't want to move or wake up because it feels too good."* **But his dog woke him, he made a fire and he was able to eat some food and call for help.**

This moving story illustrates the **spiritual condition** of many people today. They are **SPIRITUALLY COLD** and sadly are **oblivious to their true condition**. Thank God for all the ways in which He arouses such sleepers.

He FEEDS US WITH HIS WORD AND CAUSES US TO MOVE AND EVENTUALLY PROVIDES HIS HOLY SPIRIT SO THAT WE ARE FINALLY AWAKEN TO HIS TRUTH. Sometimes His methods used to awaken US are drastic, but they are always for OUR good.

Let us not imagine that because He shakes us, He therefore hates us. He awakens us from weariness because He loves us and wants to save us from an *eternal death*. When we were "ready to perish," He was "ready to save us."

**Trust your life in His hand!!**

IF WE ARE WILLING TO TAKE ALL THE STEPS HE PROVIDES US FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WE WILL FIND OURSELVES "SPIRITUALLY FIT" AND READY FOR OUR DAILY WALK IN HIS KINGDOM.

**ARE YOU WILLING TO DO AS HE SUGGESTS SO YOU CAN PASS HIS FITNESS TEST?**

**AMEN.**