



**Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**

*Philippians 2:12-13*

## Spiritual workout

Did you know that the average *Planet Fitness* has 6,500 members—but their gyms are built to only accommodate 300 people at a time?

Now, you might be tempted to think some architect goofed on the design. But there's a reason why these gyms are so much smaller than their total membership. True, not every member is going to work out at the same time, but that doesn't entirely explain the discrepancy between 6,500 members and a 300-capacity gym. So, what's up with this math?

Well, according to USA Today, 67% of gym memberships go completely unused. That's right: there are people who pay to go to a gym they'll never go to.

Sounds ridiculous, right? I mean, isn't working out what a member of a gym naturally does?

We as Christians are called to "work out" too; and this kind of work out is something the Christian naturally does.

The apostle Paul writes, "Therefore, my dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Now, Paul *is not* saying that we need to earn our salvation. The same apostle Paul also wrote in Romans 3:28 that "a person is [made right with God] *by faith apart from observing the [commandments of God].*" We are reconciled to God purely by God's *undeserved love*—on account of Christ alone—through faith in him. But that same faith in Jesus seeks to express itself in action. That we exercise our faith and do good works is natural—no different than a good tree bearing good fruit.

So, what does this spiritual exercise of our faith look like?

We fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We respect our parents and our teachers. We seek to help and befriend our neighbors—no matter who they are. We use our words to build up, not tear down. We not only see God's gifts of sexuality and marriage as good things, but we appreciate the good paradigms for sex and marriage God has given us—because God desires to not only give us these gifts but keep these good gifts good. We turn to God's Word for answers to life's biggest questions—and strive to be always ready to give an explanation for the hope we have in Jesus. We anchor our identity solely in Jesus—who he is and what he has won and done for you, me, and the world.



## Spiritual workout - continued

That's quite the spiritual workout, isn't it? I mean, don't you feel sometimes that it'd be easier to bench press 300 pounds than to make it through three hours on your phone without any sexual temptations? Don't you feel sometimes like it'd be easier to hang clean for three hours straight than to go three days without saying or posting anything bad about anyone? Don't you feel sometimes like it'd be easier to run on a treadmill for ten miles than to go ten minutes without complaining? Talk about a workout!

Here's the thing: as Christ-followers, our spiritual workout is going to be—well, messy. Like any workout, there will be sweat and tears. We'll get tired. We'll fall. We'll fail, too. We may even want to give up. In this world, we will experience great trouble; but take heart: *Jesus has overcome the world!*

Your right standing with God doesn't rest on how strong your faith is, but how strong the object of your faith is—and there is no one stronger than Jesus, the object of your faith! When sin had separated us from God, God—in Christ—showed the strength of his arm and pulled us close to him. Where we would lose in the daily struggle with temptation, Jesus threw down with the tempter himself and outed Satan for the wimp he is. Jesus was tempted in every way we are, but Jesus, for our sake, didn't sin once!

But Jesus didn't just need to perfectly live for you; he needed to die for you. Jesus endured the wrath of God on the cross *for you* so nothing would separate you from his love. Jesus faced off against sin, death, and hell itself—and emerged victorious from the grave! Through faith, his victory is your victory.

But the God who has done amazing things *for you* does amazing things *through you* too. Just as God gets all the credit for your salvation, he gets all the credit for your fruits of faith! "It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose."

So, take comfort as you flex your faith. Your gracious, mighty God is spotting you.

**Prayer: Dear Jesus, when our spiritual workout would leave us exhausted and frustrated, remind us that you have already lifted our sin, guilt, and shame from our shoulders and carried it to the cross. There, our failures have already died with you, and in you, we have new life. Because of you, Jesus, we have complete forgiveness and heaven as our home. Through you, Jesus, we are more than conquerors. In your name we pray. Amen.**