

EXTENDING YOUR ENERGIES

INTRODUCTION

Some of God's choice servants have died prematurely because they did not take care of their health. Charles Spurgeon, a world-known preacher of the 19th century in London, England, died at age 57 from overweight. D.L. Moody, the famous American evangelist, died at age 62 from the same self-inflicted disease. David Brainerd, a missionary to the American Indians in the 19th century, died at 29 from ill health. George Whitefield, a leading evangelist in the great American revival of the 19th century, died at age 56. Calvin, one of the great leaders of the Reformation, expired before sixty from poor digestion. Heart attacks sideline many Christian leaders each year. Stomach ulcers and digestive tract complications hinder hundreds of God's people.

What is your responsibility to your health? Are you too busy to take care of yourself? Is that the right kind of busyness? Do you feel like you just don't have the energy to get things done even though they are really important? What can you do about it?

I Thessalonians 5 is a good chapter to help us think about our personal responsibility:

"Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled...

But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet."

God has given you a mind to use, He has given you a body to be a good steward of, and He has provided you with many physical and medical resources. Let's take a look at them and see how we can always be prepared, alert, and self-controlled.

I. QUALITY INPUT

A. Food

1. **"You are what you eat"**

Now this is not true in the sense that you will turn into a banana if you eat bananas, but it is true that the healthier you eat, the healthier you will be. If you don't have much energy, are you eating enough meat? Yes, it is expensive, but lack of protein drags your body down, so you need to have some kind of protein every day: meat, cheese, fish, or legumes.

2. **There are foods that we need + need to do without**

Every day you need protein, fat and starch. What you don't need is coke, candy, and ice cream. It is a temptation when you are in a hurry and traveling to meetings to just grab an ice cream cone, or a candy bar, or a bottle of coke. Yes, it gives you quick energy, but it also runs out quickly and leaves very little nourishment in your body. And you have wasted money on it instead of carrying some bread and sausage with you, or buying some fruit. Some of these quick foods do fill you up, but they don't provide any vitamins or minerals and this lack of vitamins will slowly wear your body down.

3. **The amount of food is important**

You have probably heard the expression "too much of a good thing." This is definitely true of food. You can actually have a very healthy diet, but if you are constantly eating beyond the feeling of fullness, you will gain more and more weight. It creeps on slowly and adds a burden to your overall system in having to drag this extra weight everywhere you go. Most illnesses are aggravated by overweight, and most overweight people die before their time.



4. ***An eating schedule is important***

Disciplining yourself to eat on a schedule will help you to have better eating habits. Get up early enough to eat a good breakfast at home instead of buying some sweet bread at 10 in the morning. If you have a schedule of groups that you are leading, look and see when you need to eat on that day. Can you get a good hot meal sometime during the day?

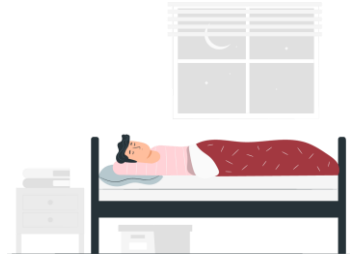
Not! — see it
want it
eat it

That = sin. It is self-indulgence, and usually over-indulgence, and will destroy your efforts to take good care of your body.

B. Sleep

1. ***A sleep schedule is personal + vital***

Not everyone needs the same amount of sleep, but everyone needs regular amounts of sleep. You need to establish a regular bedtime that best fits your schedule, as well as a regular time to rise. The body establishes its own clock for sleeping and rising, so if you do this regularly at the same time, your whole system will function much more efficiently. Don't worry about the emergencies that come up when you lose sleep or are totally off schedule. But at the same time, don't make every day an emergency!



2. ***The effects of too little***

If you regularly do not get enough sleep you will become less alert and much more irritable. It will make you inefficient, and probably difficult to live and work with. So working longer is not always smarter when you are consistently losing sleep to do it.

3. ***The effects of too much***

Interestingly enough too much sleep can also have negative effects. If you are always waking up tired, even if you sleep 8 or 9 hours, you may be oversleeping and confusing your body clock. Again, it is a matter of "too much of a good thing" which turns out to be not good at all. You should never need more than 9 hours of sleep unless you are ill, and most people function very efficiently on 7 hours. Remember this warning from Proverbs 19:15: "Laziness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle man will suffer hunger."

4. ***Do not eat just before going to bed***

If you have trouble going to sleep, don't eat in the evening. Many times your stomach is upset trying to process food, so if you eat little or nothing, you will be able to sleep much more soundly. Especially as your body ages it is better for your digestion if you are up and active. It encourages your muscles and blood circulation to work more efficiently in the process of digestion.

C. Exercise

What is proper for you is most important.

1. ***Too much may not be instructive***

In 1 Timothy 4:8 Paul said that bodily exercise profits little, so we need to be careful when we think about getting a proper amount of exercise that we keep it in perspective with our spiritual life.

2. ***Too little may be destructive (Exercise does give spiritual results)***

On the other hand, not getting any exercise could mean that you are frequently sick, or even end up with a heart attack. God has made our bodies to work, and good exercise keeps our heart and lungs strong and blood flowing efficiently. If you are weak and ill, you certainly will not be a more effective servant of Jesus Christ. And He will call you to accountability if your weakness and illness is lack of care in getting out and getting normal exercise.

3. ***The right amount is constructive***

Exercise daily. A brisk 20 minute walk every day is enough to keep you in good condition. You don't have to buy special equipment or spend huge amounts of time. Walking instead of taking the trolley bus might be the answer.

Walking up the stairs instead of using the elevator is another little way to get your heart pumping and your muscles working. Do something every day.

D. Chemicals, Drugs and Poisons



1. *Become a label reader (closely)*

There is nothing healthier than good, home-cooked food. Now we can buy lots of food that is prepared in packages and cans. However, all of those have additives to keep them from spoiling or to add color, and those additives are chemicals which can build up in your body and make you sick. So before you buy a lot of those kinds of things, read the labels and see what you are actually putting into your body.

2. *Are you a chemical zombie or a creation of God?*

What kind of medications are you taking? There are good medicines available that can really help when we are ill, but how often are you taking them? They can also unbalance your whole system. God has created your body in such a way that it often recuperates by itself given the proper nutrients and rest. But lots of times we are looking for a quick fix. Make sure you really need the medication you are taking, and are not using it as a substitute for taking good care of your body.

3. *Most drugs are derived through a mixture of chemicals*

Usually chemicals are not well assimilated by the body. If you have to be on a medication for a long time, make sure that you are also drinking kefir or eating yogurt to help keep a good balance in your digestive system. Ask the doctor if there are natural medicines you could take that will do the same thing as the medication you are on. Ask the doctor how long it is necessary to take it.

4. *Adverse reaction to stress can poison our entire system*

This is a danger that few people think about. We don't even have to take chemicals to poison our system. If we are constantly under stress, we can poison ourselves! Many diseases are directly related to stress, like stomach ulcers. Stress weakens our whole body so that we become susceptible to many illnesses. Examine your life. Why is it stressful? What can you do about it? Interestingly enough getting some exercise is helpful in relieving stress. But you may need to sit down and have a good talk with the Lord about ongoing stress in your life. He has said, "*My yoke is easy and my burden is light.*" Whose burden have you picked up? Do you need to give that burden to the Lord?

E. Fasting

1. *Biblical examples of fasting*

The Bible has so much to say about fasting that we need to take it into serious consideration. The list of people in the Bible who fasted is long: Moses the lawgiver, David the king, Elijah the prophet, Esther the Queen, Daniel the leader, Anna the prophetess, Paul the Apostle, Jesus Christ the incarnate Son. Many of the great Christians throughout church history fasted and witnessed to its value; among them were Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Charles Finney, on and on.

2. *Regular fasting was assumed by Jesus*

There is no Biblical command about regular fasting, but it is talked about in such a way that it is assumed. When Jesus talked about fasting he said, "**When** you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But **when** you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matt. 6:16-18)

You will notice at least two things in this passage. Jesus did not say "if" you fast, but "when" you fast, so it was an accepted practice. The other issue is that it is not to be done for men. This is between you and God.

3. *Fasting is abstaining from food, not drink*

In Scripture the normal means of fasting involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water. In the forty-day fast of Jesus, we are told that "he ate nothing" and that toward the end of the fast "he was hungry" and satan tempted him to eat, indicating that the abstaining was from food and not

water. There are also several examples in Scripture of what could be called an “absolute fast” or abstaining from both food and water. This seems to be a desperate measure to meet an emergency.

4. *Partial fasts*

It is also possible to do a partial fast where no solid food is taken, just nutritious liquids. Or perhaps certain foods are given up for a period of time. Some people do not have the physical strength for a complete fast, and it is not wise for some medical conditions, but God is interested in the motive of the heart. We recommend that even if you have physical ailments or limitations that you still try and find an acceptable way to fast that is pleasing to both God and yourself. Do not shrink back, God is not pleased with those who shrink back. Give it a try and let God do something special for you and in you. God is looking for the man who want to find ways to draw close to Him.

5. *Fasting for physical benefits*

Among the benefits of fasting are physical benefits. Fasting actually brings physical renewal, and you may want to fast regularly for those physical benefits. But do not confuse spiritual fasting and physical fasting. Fasting actually cleans many of the toxins out of the body, especially an extended fast of three or more days. If you are having a number of physical problems or a general feeling of exhaustion, you may want to consider a prolonged fast. Be careful though and do not suddenly decide to fast for two weeks. You need to have a regular habit of fasting weekly first, then fast for 3 days several times over a period of several months, then for a week, and if that has gone well, then you can do a longer fast.

6. *Fasting brings spiritual sustenance*

So the question still stands, why fast? Briefly, fasting must center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-ordained. It is not a way to manipulate God to get our way. It is not a way to prove to others that we are more holy than they. It is a means of bringing our lives into alignment with God and focusing our whole attention on Him. Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by God, not food. Fasting helps us keep our balance in life. We so quickly crave what we do not need. God may give us many other benefits from fasting, but it must be centered on Him.

7. *Spiritual fasting equates spiritual fellowship*

Having a spiritual goal will be more beneficial than just a physical goal. You probably will not be very successful in fasting if you see it only as a physical thing. But when your focus is on the Lord and how you can draw closer to Him and hear His voice more closely then fasting results in sweet fellowship with Him. This is the kind of focus that will make you value fasting and help it become a regular part of your life.

F. Spiritual

We have spent a lot of time on physical issues that we don't usually talk about. However, we don't want you to think that only the physical will help. The following need to be a regular part of your life.

1. *Fellowship with Lord*

No energy? Do you try to save time by **not** spending time with the Lord? He **is** your source of strength. Stay in close touch with Him.

2. *Fellowship with Christians.*

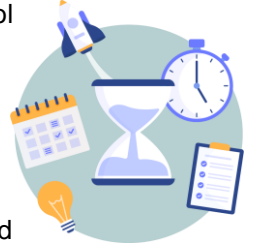
Notice we are talking about **fellowship** with other believers. You can be ministering to people and still not fellowship. Fellowship means it is a two-way street, meaning that you are also being ministered to, whether that is through corporal worship, group prayer, or encouragement from testimonies. As a matter of fact every group you lead should have this element of fellowship in it.

3. *Fellowship with family. (Family altar is a must)*

Yes, you need to build spiritual fellowship in your family also. You need to establish a regular time of family devotions, and that should not just be **you** reading the Bible, **you** preaching, **you** praying. Make it a time when every family member can participate, so that it will minister to every individual, including yourself.

G. Organization

Our last item for input is organization. There are many benefits from following an organized plan for your work and life. It will help you not to spin your wheels, always feeling life is out of control and never knowing quite what is happening.



1. Time

You have learned about schedules, about planning the academic year: what lessons are you going to coach? When does each of your groups meet? And you have also learned to break things down by month and/or week, and then down to the daily schedule. How well do you stick to your schedule? Is it lost? Get it out, dust it off, and start following a schedule again. If you can develop a habit of making a schedule and following it, you will be able to accomplish a lot more simply because you know exactly what you need to do and when you need to do it.

2. Duties

You need to examine your duties and make sure you have organized them well. What are things that can be combined? If you have to go to the church for something, is there something else you can do there at the same time that would save you a trip? Do you need to spend extra time with one of your students to mentor and encourage him more? Why don't you take him along to an out of town group you are leading? He will provide company for you, and you will spend time with him instead of having to take another evening to talk to him and pray with him. And make sure that the duties you have are things you should be doing. Don't pick up every monkey (task) someone gives you. Learn to say **NO** when it is not your responsibility and interferes with more important things.

II. QUALITY OUTPUT

If you are putting better things into your body, caring for yourself better, you will become more effective overall. Let's look at some of the areas that will improve.

A. More Enthusiasm

When we have enthusiasm, we can do nearly anything. We feel like we can conquer the world. As a famous poet once said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

1. **Enthusiasm is a product of good health—both physical and spiritual**

So if you improve in health your enthusiasm for life and work will increase.

2. **Enthusiasm is catching**

If you are more enthusiastic, everyone around you will be more enthusiastic. You will actually pass your energy on to other people!

B. Better Spirit

Your whole outlook on life will improve including how you relate to others and how you handle your responsibilities and the problems that come with them.

1. **Toward the students**

You will be able to focus more on their needs when you aren't dragged down with your own.

2. **Toward the team and leaders**

You will have a more balanced perspective in dealing with your colleagues.

3. **Toward obstacles**

You will be able to see obstacles as challenges instead of unconquerable problems.

4. **Toward maturity**

You won't feel so threatened by growing older because you will feel so good, maybe better than you have for a long time.

C. Better Example

Like it or not, the Bible clearly teaches that we are not to let our freedom be a stumbling block to others. In fact, it is specifically talking about food. Taking quality care of our bodies is an excellent way of setting a high standard of personal conduct to all who know us, one which will allow them to experience the same benefits as us.

1. *To students*

Students need to see a life that they can emulate.

2. *To those who look to us for guidance*

You have a wide area of influence. Your family is looking at you, other leaders are looking at you.

D. Better Witness

People often don't understand what we expect of them when we talk about being the temple of the Holy Spirit or of being good stewards of the resources God has given us. But when we take good care of our bodies, we become a living parable that they clearly see and understand.

1. *To saved*

People are inspired by health and vigor and enthusiasm.

2. *To unsaved*

People are drawn to someone who looks and acts successful instead of burdened down and weary with life.

E. Better Service

People with cars know that if you want them to last long and go far, you need to take good care of them all the time. It is the same with any other piece of machinery. They always produce the best results when they are taken care of the way the manufacturer specified. God also made our bodies subject to certain rules, and taking good care of our bodies the way He intended means that they will be more productive and of greater use to us. Here are a couple of examples.

1. *Able to work for church*

If you have extended your energy by having better health, you will be able to do more in your local body of believers—whether that is leading another course or discipling another brother in leadership.

2. *Able to serve those less fortunate*

That energy will help you to be compassionate towards needy people and find ways to help them, because you won't be struggling to just get by yourself.

F. Better Concentration

With greater energy comes a clearer, brighter mind, and you will notice that in several areas. I will mention just a few.

1. *In Bible reading*

You will be more alert as you read. It isn't that the Holy Spirit can't speak to a tired mind, but if you have been habitually tired and worn, you will notice a huge difference once you have moved to a healthier lifestyle.

2. *Detecting progress in ministry*

Your mind will be clearer to focus on the ministry and what should be happening there.

3. *In individual student's lives*

And you will be able to give yourself more readily to observing your students and seeing how you can encourage and mentor individuals.

G. More Creativity

Our mind is highly subject to our health patterns. Better health brings the reward of a better working mind and with that come new and fresh ideas. Good nutrition, getting enough sleep, and fasting from time to time are the quickest ways to refresh the mind with new vigor.

1. **Better ways to work**

You will suddenly have new perspectives on how work should be done and how it can be done more effectively.

2. **Meeting the needs of people**

And this stream of ideas will include new ways of dealing with people, greater insights into what makes them tick and how you can minister to them.

CONCLUSION

Vibrant health is not about weight, exercise, or recipes; it's a process, a lifestyle. It is about 'core' changes in who you are and how you live.

So what do you need to do to extend your energies? Have you been lackadaisical about caring for your health and your body? Do you want to add more years to your life, and more energy to those years? Fortunately, it is never too late to make improvements. God is gracious to forgive us even when we have abused His precious gifts to us. Take time to ask Him right now what changes **you** need to make so that your efforts for Christ can be multiplied.

God specializes in miracles. He can renew your body. He can even 'turn back the clock' and renew your youthfulness. A shining example is how egotistical Mr. Rockefeller lay near death in his early fifties, overcome with fear and greed. Then He changed his lifestyle, began to focus on others and Mr. Rockefeller lived healthily until his death at 98. This is God's doing and He can do it and wants to do it for you. Brother, begin to focus on extending your energies. Get with it, let God renew you. A new you, wow! A new husband, a new dad. Your wife will be excited, and your children will be. New energies for you, for them, for the church and for God. Hallelujah, it is never too late to start. Hallelujah to our Maker. Amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Choose four areas of input that you desire to improve in your life. Make a plan to begin implementing them immediately. Make sure you write down what you are going to do, when you are going to do it, and how you are going to do it. Also find someone to keep you accountable. Bring your plan and a progress report to the next meeting.

