

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF ATHLETICS

The Bodily Exercise program at **Dayspring Christian Academy**, a requirement for all students, is based upon the belief that our physical condition should be a help in fulfilling the call of God upon our life. Moses and Caleb are good examples of this truth. Each maintained their respective “temples” to such a degree that it qualified them for greater responsibility later in life. Moses was as physically fit particularly in his eyesight, at 120 years of age, as he had been during his young life! (Deuteronomy 34:7) Caleb watched an entire generation die who had rejected God’s call (as a result of the 10 spies), yet he had kept his body in such a physical condition that he was as strong at eighty as he had been at forty, ready to take on a mountain of giants. (Joshua 14:10-12) This physical condition gave both of them a greater ability to fulfill God’s highest call upon their lives.

While we realize that in certain situations God can give supernatural physical strength (such as Elijah outrunning a chariot in 1st kings 18:46), this in no way negates the responsibility of bringing our bodies into subjection or discipline. God’s grace in certain situations does not become the rule at the expense of regular consistent discipline. Therefore, a well disciplined program that helps one to take dominion over his physical body is needed and a vital part of a solid Biblical education. Without it, we neglect an important part of discipleship: the body or “temple” the Lord has given to us.

In 1st Timothy 4, verse 8, we read:

“...For bodily exercise profiteth little: but Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and have that which is to come”

This Scripture does not diminish the role of bodily exercise, but instead compares its lasting value to godly exercise or godliness. The content of this passage is an exhortation by Paul to Timothy regarding what is needed by leaders in the local church. He is warning Timothy not to get sidetracked from the central focus in life: *godliness after the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The original Greek implies that the word “little” does not refer to little value, but rather limited value or temporal in nature. In other words, bodily exercise will only be profitable in this life, but godliness will profit you in both this life *and* the one to come.

It is certainly implied here that there are two forms of exercise that both profit a believer’s Christian life here on earth, but one takes precedence or priority over the other. We could also state that without the context, vision and goal of godliness or godly exercise (also including the academic discipline or the mind in godly truths), bodily exercise becomes of little profit since its focus is only on this life. Without Christ at the center of any athletic game or program, it is only a matter of time before it will degenerate into a temporal, worldly and selfish pattern. **When the body and its skills are emphasized at the expense of godliness we enter the realm of idolatry.** That is why it is so important to have a clear Christian philosophy of athletics. When our bodies are incorruptible in the next life, we will not need the discipline of bodily exercise at all.

In effect: Godly exercise is the discipline of submitting our soul (mind, will, and emotions) to our spirits (where the Holy Spirit dwells). It is a discipline of forming Godly character within our lives by allowing Christ to manifest his life in and through us. This takes precedence over bodily exercise, and should always direct its focus as well as limiting its scope and influence in our lives. Godly exercise without bodily exercise allows us little outlets. Bodily exercise is actually submitting of our body (coordination of muscles, etc.) to our soul. This is important. Without this, all the godliness we exhibit in our soul has little expression here

on earth. Little impact is made as well, especially through our appearance and ability to endure physically in service to God and man.

Both Godly and bodily exercise, in their proper balance is needed in order for one to be an obedient disciple of Christ with, spirit, soul, and body in good working order. It is precisely this understanding: that bodily exercise is a servant to the godliness formed by Christ in the life of the individual that sets our philosophy apart from the world. The world makes an idol of the physical man, idolizes physical skill and success while the Christian makes a servant of the physical man: seeking to glorify God and his purpose.