

A CHRISTIAN HEALTH AND FITNESS PLAN

Scripture: I Timothy 4:7-8 [read]

Intro: I'd like to introduce you to the newest member of the Darling family – PATCHES THE CAT!

{Slide #1 – Patches}

- * Patches is quite a blessing for us “empty nesters” to have around – she cuddles some, does a lot of cute things like curl up and rest in the bathroom sink or insert herself into the nearest open Wal-Mart bag, and she slips and slides on the kitchen floor while chasing balls or ribbons
 - * Patches is also a challenge at times – she is every bit a toddler, so we have to keep certain things like toilet paper out of her reach, or she'll catch it and shred it
 - * Overall, she's a cutie, and we're glad to have her!
- * As I think about what I want Patches to be in her adult years, one thing comes to mind – I want her to be as healthy as possible! To that end, there are certain efforts we make to help Patches become a healthy cat:**
- * She's eating Science Diet (“steak”)
 - * We play with her an awful lot (lots of exercise!)
 - * She will go to the vet's office twice a year and get all the shots she needs
 - * Keep her away from things that are hazardous to a kitten
- And I expect that all these efforts will have certain **value** for us in the long run: Keep her around a long time (big, since I had to put Pumpkin to sleep earlier this year); keep her from health problems and too many costly vet visits, we hope!

Now you may be wondering what the connection is between my cat, and what we are doing here today, namely, focusing on our Lord and Christian life – well, believe it or not, there is one, and it is this:

*** Just as efforts need to be made, in order for Patches to become a healthy cat, so efforts need to be made in order for you and I to become healthy as Christians!**

Do you believe that's true?

Evidently, the Apostle Paul, the writer of I Timothy, is leaning in that direction, in verses 7 and 8 of chapter 4.

- * In verses 7 and 8, Paul draws our attention to the importance of training the physical body (and we know, too, that it has some importance – the better you take of your body, the better you feel, the more disease you can ward off, the longer you can potentially live)
- * But then Paul, sticking with the illustration of training, pleads with us to remember that while physical training has value, spiritual training in godliness has an even greater value!
- * Wm. Barclay comments on this: “Physical training is good, and even essential; but its use is limited.....it produces only results that last for so short a period of time, for the body passes away. Training in godliness develops the whole (person) in body, mind and spirit, and its results affect not only time, but eternity as well.”

Okay, so if spiritual training in godliness is so important, because it affects our lives (and the lives of others) now, and into eternity, as Paul and William Barclay indicate, the big question becomes:

*** What kind of intentional training in godliness are you exercising in your life?**

And then other questions ensue: What efforts **am** I making **right now** to facilitate training in godliness? What efforts **should** I be making? **Where do I go from here** to get training in godliness done well in my life?

*Well, let's start with this.....

.....If you were going to begin training physically, on your way to becoming healthy and fit, it seems to me that you would need a training **plan, with specific health and fitness actions.**

* Last August, upon looking at my cholesterol numbers, and other unnerving physical findings, Dr. Cheryl wanted to impress a physical training plan on me. She likes the following health and fitness actions:

* 10,000 steps per day (walk with your wife ain't bad!)

* Healthy snacks – Wheat thins, almonds or walnuts, fruits and vegetables

* The oatmeal thing counts with her, too

* All these **actions**, and many more, were part of a **plan** she gave me to help me achieve more physical fitness

Just as you or I could use a physical plan, with specific health and fitness actions, so it seems we could all use a spiritual plan.....A Christian Health & Fitness Plan, complete with specific health and fitness actions

{Slide # 2: Christian Health & Fitness Plan}

I'd like to suggest a such a plan to you today – a plan that has been years in the making.....a plan that I believe has proven and helpful action steps, a plan that arose out of my concern for what I would give to new Christians, to help them have a target for what profitable things they should aim to do in the Christian life (and maybe even how often these things should be done, and how much time to take in doing them).

This plan, that I believe the Lord has helped me develop, is based on 8 specific actions (Christian exercises, if you will) that every Christian should aim to be involved in:

{Slide #3: Eight Basic Actions/Exercises}

Church Attendance
Time With God
Small Group Attendance
Christian Service
Tithes & Offerings
Scripture Memorization (Illus.: Phil. 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing.....”)
“Soul Building” [see p. 4 in your booklet]
Evangelism “Units” [see p. 4 in your booklet]

This Christian Health & Fitness Plan (CHFP) also has **three separate levels involvement**.....three separate time commitment levels, if you will, that are loosely based on what I interpret to be Christian maturity levels spoken of in I John 2:12-14. Those levels are as follows.....

..... Children
..... Young Men
..... Fathers

Let's take those terms, and proceed to make them a bit more generic:

..... **Child Of God**
..... **Young Adult**
..... **Spiritual Parent**

And these levels become the levels of involvement that we will plug into this Christian Health & Fitness Plan

Then, just to really freak you out, I will add the approximate time commitments, needed at each level of involvement in the CHFP, and this is what you get (please look at page 5 in your booklet, or the slides up here)

{Slide #4 – Approximate Time Commitments, part 1}

- Church Attendance, Time With God, Small Group Attendance

{Slide #5 – Approximate Time Commitments, part 2}

- Christian Service, Tithes & Offerings, Scripture Memorization

{Slide #6 – Approximate Time Commitments, part 3}

- “Soul Builder”; Evangelism “Units”

So, what do you think of this CHFP? Well, take it home, and mull it over.

If you'll get God's help in prayer, and go to work on this plan, (and an accountability partner couldn't hurt).....I guarantee that you will experience godly health and fitness, maybe in levels greater than you have ever experienced before

*** And think of the values that will be yours!**

And, as you do put this CHFP into effect in your life, please keep these *four disclaimers* in mind:

{Slide #7 – Four Disclaimers, parts 1 and 2}

1. *The CHFP will only work for you if you have a right relationship with God, through Jesus Christ.*

- Otherwise, these actions become rules, and, as Josh McDowell has said: "Rules without relationship leads to rebellion".

2. *There are, I think, two major obstacles to incorporating the CHFP into your life:*

a. *If your idea of the Christian life is only to use God as a heavenly ATM, a deliverer when you are in trouble, and a way to escape hell after you die – then you won't want to incorporate the actions of the CHFP into your life.*

- Don't do Christianity that way! You'll miss the values, and you'll miss out on relationships that God would really like to bless you with!

b. Obstacle #2: You may think that there is no way you would ever have enough time to do this CHFP

{Slides #8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15}

* Folks, pick the right level of involvement, that fits where you are in your life right now (e.g. – Mom with preschoolers at home)

{Slide #16 – Four Disclaimers, parts 3 and 4}

3. Incorporate the CHFP into your life slowly, but definitely!

*** Warren: Takes 3 weeks to make something a habit!!!**

*** Start with “Child Of God”, action #1 – take up to 3 weeks to get the habit of Church Attendance grounded into your life, and then move on to “Time With God”, etc.**

**4. If you don't understand all the implications of this plan, I can help.
Come see me next Sunday at 8:30 or 5:00!**