

# Do You Know How to Exercise Your Spirit?

We know consistent physical exercise keeps our body fit and contributes to our overall well-being. And we also know mental exercise like reading and solving crossword puzzles helps our mind stay sharp.

But did you know that as Christians, we need an additional kind of exercise? For a healthy Christian life, we need spiritual exercise.

## Our human spirit

So what do we mean when we say *spiritual exercise*? We simply mean *the exercise of our spirit*.

God created us with a body to contact the physical realm, a soul to contact the psychological realm, and a spirit to contact the spiritual realm. Our human spirit, the deepest part of our being, has the unique ability to contact and receive God.

When we first believed in Jesus Christ, we were born of the Spirit. The Lord as the life-giving Spirit came into and was mingled with our spirit. After we're born again, our Christian life is a life of continuously contacting the Lord, fellowshiping with Him, receiving more of Him, and living by Him.

## So how can we contact the Lord?

We can contact the Lord by exercising, or using, our spirit, as John 4:24 tells us: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit." Because God is Spirit, we must worship Him in our spirit—our deepest part, where Christ now lives. Our spirit is the key to our relationship with God. Using our spirit is the God-designed way for us to fellowship with Him, know Him, and experience Him.

## Exercising our spirit is for a healthy Christian life

In terms of physical exercise, we're all familiar with the expression use it or lose it. For example, if we stop using a particular muscle, that muscle becomes weaker, and eventually will atrophy. This abnormal condition is the result of neglecting to exercise that muscle. To be strong and healthy, we need to use our muscles.

In the same way, if we don't exercise our spirit to contact the Lord and fellowship with Him, our spiritual health inevitably suffers. The less we exercise our spirit, the weaker we become. As a result, we're more prone to sin, the temptations of the world, and other spiritual "ailments." How can we be healthy—much less grow in the Lord—if we aren't regularly contacting Him by exercising our spirit?

## **Exercise requires focus and effort**

Actually, physical exercise benefits us most when it becomes a habit. The same is true of spiritual exercise. But we can't build up a habit of using our spirit if we only contact the Lord when we're met with major problems. Exercising our spirit benefits us most when it's part of our daily life and not a special event or something that we do at isolated times.

And with any kind of exercise, some effort and deliberate action is required. For example, we don't usually wake up eager to go for a run. Sometimes we have to exert ourselves just to get our running shoes on. Once we take the deliberate action to get started, we're soon out the door and on our way.

Using our spirit in our daily walk doesn't come naturally to us, and sometimes it's even difficult. It's a lot easier to stay in our anxious thoughts or unhappy feelings when we're worried or upset. But that's the perfect time for us to exercise our spirit, to actively and deliberately turn to the Lord to contact Him and receive more of Him right in the middle of our situation.

## **What are some practical ways to exercise our spirit?**

Though there are numerous forms of spiritual exercise, today we'll discuss five ways:

### **1. Praying to the Lord**

The best way to exercise our spirit is by praying. We may assume the right way to pray is to compose a formal prayer while we're in a particular place. But we actually can exercise our spirit at any moment, in any place, to speak to the Lord in prayer about anything and everything. In this way, we contact Him in our spirit and receive more of Him.

### **2. Calling on the Lord**

Calling on the name of the Lord is a great way to exercise our spirit. To call on the Lord is simply to call His name, "Lord Jesus, oh, Lord Jesus." When we call on Him even just

for a little while, we're brought to Him in our spirit. By calling on Him, we're refreshed and supplied with more of His life.

### **3. Pray-reading God's Word**

Pray-reading, which is simply to read and pray over the words of the Bible, is an excellent way to exercise our spirit. As we read God's Word, we can turn what we read into our prayer to the Lord.

Let's use Matthew 4:4 as an example: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." We can pray with these words like this: "Lord, man shall not live on bread alone. Thank You, Lord, I do not live on bread alone, but on every word out of Your mouth. Thank You, Lord, for every word! Cause me to hunger for Your Word."

Pray-reading the Word of God is good exercise for our spirit and nourishes us. Starting our day with this kind of exercise helps us be spiritually fit.

### **4. Singing**

An enjoyable way to exercise our spirit is singing to the Lord. If we feel tired and unhappy when we wake up, singing helps us shake off our sleepiness, brightens our mood, and turns us to the Lord. It activates our spirit and enriches our enjoyment of the Lord.

Throughout the day we can exercise our spirit by singing a hymn or a short song to the Lord. For instance, we can learn and sing this song about Emmanuel to the Lord and be reminded that He is with our spirit.

### **5. Thanking the Lord**

We can also exercise our spirit by thanking the Lord. We can thank Him for saving us, living in us, taking care of us, growing in us, and for everything that happens in our lives. Thanking the Lord, even for small things, makes a big difference in our life. The more we practice thanking Him, the more uplifted and supplied we are.

Notice how these ways involve opening our mouth. Instead of staying silent and locked up in our thoughts and feelings, opening our mouth really helps us to exercise our spirit. As we pray, call, sing, pray-read, and thank the Lord aloud, we contact, receive, and enjoy the Lord.

## Supplemental verses concerning calling on the Lord

**Genesis 4:26** And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Jehovah.

**Footnote on “call upon the name of Jehovah”** The Hebrew word means *to call out to, to cry unto*, i.e., to cry out audibly. Because men realized that their life was vanity (see note 21) and that they were frail and mortal they spontaneously began to call upon the name of Jehovah, the eternal One. Although they were vain and weak, by calling on the name of the Lord, they were made rich and strong, for they entered into the riches and strength of the One on whom they called (Rom. 10:12-13 and notes).

**Genesis 12:8** And he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to Jehovah and called upon the name of Jehovah.

**Psalms 116:13** I will take up the cup of salvation / And call upon the name of Jehovah.  
**17** To You I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, / And I will call upon the name of Jehovah.

**Footnote on “call upon the name of Jehovah”** God’s rich and full salvation is a cup, a portion, given to us, and the way for us to drink this cup and partake of this salvation is to call on the name of the Lord (vv. 2, 4, 13, 17; Gen. 4:26; Isa. 12:2-4; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:12-13).

**Isaiah 12:2-4** God is now my salvation; / I will trust and not dread; / For Jah Jehovah is my strength and song, / And He has become my salvation. **3** Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing / From the springs of salvation, **4** And you will say in that day, / Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name! / Make His deeds known among the peoples; / Remind them that His name is exalted.

**Footnote on “call upon His name”** By calling on the name of the Lord with rejoicing and praising, we draw water out of the springs of salvation.

**Joel 2:32** And everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah shall be saved; / For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem will be an escape, / As Jehovah has said, / Even for the remnant / Whom Jehovah calls.

**Footnote on “calls on the name of Jehovah”** This indicates that God’s elect people will be saved through their calling on the name of Jehovah, which in the New Testament is equivalent to calling on the name of the Lord Jesus (see note 21<sup>1</sup> in Matt. 1).

**Zephaniah 3:9** For then I will change the language of the peoples / Into a pure language / That they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, / To serve Him with one accord.

**Zechariah 13:9** And I will bring the third part through fire / And refine them as silver is refined / And try them as gold is tried. / They will call on My name, / And I will answer them; / I will say, They are My people, / And they will say, Jehovah is my God.

**Acts 2:21** And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

**Footnote on “calls on the name of the Lord”** Calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice that began with the New Testament. Rather, it began with Enosh, the third generation of mankind, in Gen. 4:26. It was continued by Job (Job 12:4; 27:10), Abraham (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), Moses and the children of Israel (Deut. 4:7), Samson (Judg. 15:18; 16:28), Samuel (1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 99:6), David (2 Sam. 22:4, 7; 1 Chron. 16:8; 21:26; Psa. 14:4; 17:6; 18:3, 6; 31:17; 55:16; 86:5, 7; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17; 118:5; 145:18), the psalmist Asaph (Psa. 80:18), the psalmist Heman (Psa. 88:9), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), Isaiah (Isa. 12:4), Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55, 57), and others (Psa. 99:6), all of whom practiced this in the Old Testament age. Isaiah charged the seekers of God to call upon Him (Isa. 55:6). Even the Gentiles knew that the prophets of Israel had the habit of calling on the name of God (Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11). The Gentile raised up by God from the north also called upon His name (Isa. 41:25). It is God’s commandment (Psa. 50:15; Jer. 29:12) and desire (Psa. 91:15; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9) that His people call on Him. This is the joyful way to drink from the fountain of God’s salvation (Isa. 12:3-4) and the enjoyable way to delight oneself in God (Job 27:10), that is, to enjoy Him. Hence, God’s people must call upon Him daily (Psa. 88:9). Such a jubilant practice was prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:32) concerning the New Testament jubilee. In the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was first mentioned by Peter, here, on the day of Pentecost, as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. This fulfillment is related to God’s outpouring of the all-inclusive Spirit economically upon His chosen people that they may participate in His New Testament jubilee. Joel’s prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God’s New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God’s side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all. Calling on the Lord’s name is vitally necessary in order for us, the believers in Christ, to participate in and enjoy the all-inclusive Christ with all He has accomplished, attained, and obtained (1 Cor. 1:2). It is a major practice in God’s New Testament economy that enables us to enjoy the processed Triune God for our full salvation (Rom. 10:10-13). The early believers practiced this everywhere (1 Cor. 1:2), and to the unbelievers, especially the persecutors, it became a popular sign of Christ’s believers (9:14, 21). When Stephen suffered persecution, he practiced this (7:59), and his practice surely impressed Saul, one of his persecutors (7:58-60; 22:20). Later, the unbelieving Saul persecuted the callers (9:14, 21) by taking their calling as a sign. Immediately after Saul was caught by the Lord, Ananias, who brought Saul into the fellowship of the Body of Christ, charged him to be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord, to show others that he too had become such a caller. By his word to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:22, Paul indicated that in the early days all the Lord’s seekers practiced such calling. Undoubtedly, he was one who practiced this, since he charged his young co-worker Timothy to do this that Timothy might enjoy the Lord as he did.

The Greek word for *call on* is composed of *on* and *call* (by name); thus, it is to call out audibly, even loudly, as Stephen did (7:59-60).