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**Pushpinder Singh**  
Research Scholar, Department of  
Physical Education, Punjabi  
University, Patiala, Punjab, India

## Spiritual and Corporal Fitness: A Unique Fusion for Success in Spiritual and Material Life

**Pushpinder Singh**

### Abstract

Hard work, commitment, time, and resources are necessary to grow and strengthen our physical bodies. While exercise is popular in the world today, it's certainly nothing new. Paul's exhortation for believers to exercise their spiritual growth comes down to those two simple, familiar words: "work out." But the workout Paul refers to is far more strenuous than a short jog on a treadmill—and it makes a much greater impact in your life.

**Keywords:** Spiritual, Corporal Fitness, Material Life

### Introduction

*"It would be shame.....to work so hard on our body but neglect our soul" Bonnie Pfister*

What do we think of when we hear the words "work out"? We probably think of gymnasiums, weights, and all sorts of fitness equipment. Hard work, commitment, time, and resources are necessary to grow and strengthen our physical bodies. While exercise is popular in the world today, it's certainly nothing new. Paul's exhortation for believers to exercise their spiritual growth comes down to those two simple, familiar words: "work out." But the workout Paul refers to is far more strenuous than a short jog on a treadmill—and it makes a much greater impact in your life.

When the year turns over, we reach a birthday, or mark a moment of life transition; most people take it as a cue to reflect on what they could do better or differently. For many of us, especially at New Year's, thoughts immediately turn to promises of new diets and more exercise—physical fitness. But what about spiritual fitness? What if your top priorities were inner intentions, like forgiveness and kindness, rather than outer intentions like a better body or more money?

The amazing thing that we all know, but easily forget, is that when we have inner strength the other goals we hold, like fitness, healed relationships, and prosperity, are easier to achieve.

A healthy relationship with God requires effort. The question is: How much are we willing to put into it?

Paul writes, "Train yourself to be Godly. For physical training is of some value, but Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come". If our goal is to maintain general spiritual health, we can stretch our prayer muscles casually, like a walk in the park. But if we want to grow strong—and then stronger we need a rigorous workout every day. To "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" we need to be in top shape.

But how do we accomplish this? If we are to "run in such a way as to get the prize" how are we to build our strength?

These five steps can help us grow spiritually stronger:

### 1. Find encouragement

Christian community is important because we are "mutually encouraged by each other's faith". Being around other believers and worshipping with them challenges us to "strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else"

**Correspondence**  
**Pushpinder Singh**  
Research Scholar, Department of  
Physical Education, Punjabi  
University, Patiala, Punjab, India

## **2. Pray for a larger comfort zone**

If our entire world consists of people just like us, chances are that we're more focused on feeling safe than on spreading the Gospel. Our light can only "shine before others" if we interact, on a significant level, with people who are different than we are. One way to overcome our fear of stepping out in faith is to pray for the courage to "consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus".

## **3. Warm up your faith muscles**

To be on fire for God requires stoking our spirit with the fuel of daily prayer, intense knowledge of Scripture and generous giving. Ask God to wrap you "in zeal as in a cloak" and to give you love that "burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame"

## **4. Get moving!**

Vibrant faith doesn't come to those who wait complacently, expecting God to turn up the flame. It happens when we live our love of Christ. James tells us, "Do not merely listen to the word.... Do what it says". Somewhere in our lives there is a person who is hungry and needs to eat, or thirsty and in need of drink; there is a stranger Christ wants us to care for or clothe; a sick person to serve, or a prisoner to visit.

## **5. Turn setbacks into renewed determination**

Peter denied the Lord three times, and yet Christ commanded him three times to tend his flock Saul persecuted Christians, and Christ chose him as witness to the Gentiles. The cross is proof that Christ can transform even the worst things into good. Our job is to pick ourselves up after we fail and to ask for renewed vigor to follow Christ. "For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again". With Christ beside us, there is no such thing as failure.

## **6. Conclusion**

Spiritual Fitness "But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"

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