

#23 – Can't God Send Angels Instead? - Spiritual Exercise

Introduction/Purpose: To understand what spiritual exercise is, and to know how to do it; to be encouraged to participate.

1. **Psalm 70:4** What will be the constant verbal theme of those who love God and are saved?
2. **Matthew 28:19-20** What were Jesus' final instructions to His disciples? (v.19) What encouragement would bolster their motivation to complete the final commission? (v.20; I am with you always...) How important are final words?
3. **Psalms 66:16, Acts 4:20** As Christians, how do we define witnessing? In a legal courtroom, what is a witness and what are they expected to say? What is the difference between sharing information and sharing an experience? What experience is being shared in the verses listed above? Notice that the focus here is not on how to witness, but on why we witness.
4. **Ezekiel 33:8-9** How serious is the responsibility we have to share our experiences of God with others?
5. **Matthew 25:13-30** What does God want from us in appreciation for the blessings we receive? Why would God repossess His original investment from those who fail to acquire increase? 'Use it or lose it.' What happens to a relationship with no time spent on it? What happens to a language that we neglect to use? What happens to money that we keep in the bank with no interest? What happens to perishable food that sits on the counter for days? What happens to muscles that are rendered inactive due to a cast? By exercising, our bodies use the energy that we get from food and water. If, by habitually eating without exercise, our body stores up far more energy than is used by exercise, toxins and fats accumulate in the body and cause disease. In the same way, we must exemplify; must manifest of the spiritual energy we receive from our blessings of God. In this way, we will be healthy and prepared to receive and use a fresh new supply of spiritual sustenance. When our spiritual body does not pour out the spiritual food and water that we take in, then our appetite for the Bread of life is diminished; we tend to become malnourished, from which the enemy designs that we die spiritually. The more consistently we exercise physically and spiritually, the healthier we can be physically and spiritually.
6. **1Corinthians 14:12, 2Corinthians 8:13-15** What is the purpose of the blessings of God? How is this principle demonstrated in nature? Bees/flowers, sharks/cleaner fish, humans/cultivated plants, humans/domesticated animals, etc. All life is meant to continually bless other life. God's creation is meant to continually bless the rest of God's creation.
7. **Ephesians 3:8** Why did God give Paul grace (merciful love)?
8. **Ecclesiastes 11:1-6** bread = the Word of God, (Mat 4:4) waters = many people (Rev 17:15) wind = Spirit of God (Joh 3:8) Solomon, the author, was known as 'the wisest man'. What did Solomon instruct us to do with the Word (bread) concerning people (waters)? Are we to have expectations for the results? (v.6; no) Compare v.4 to v.6; what do they tell us? (If we only look at the Spirit working in other people, and do not sow the Word of God ourselves, we will not reap anything ourselves.) The Spirit of God is responsible for Spiritual birth; Who is responsible for the development? (v.5) The focus here is not on how to witness, but on why we witness. Joh 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. Mat 4:4 ...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Isa 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. God shares His life. To reflect God's character (image) is to share God's life (the Word of God) with others.
9. **Ephesians 2:8** Jesus said: '...freely ye have received, freely give.' (Mat 10:8) What is the greatest gift that Jesus has given us?
10. **Matthew 4:19** What was Jesus' greatest purpose in teaching the disciples? If we are not being made into fishers of men, are we following Jesus?
11. **Matthew 5:14-16, Luke 18:43, John 15:8, 1Peter 2:9** Who is being praised and glorified as a result of our witness? Since only God, not us, is glorified and praised due to our witness, who is responsible to be a reliable witness? If a business wants to have a good reputation by word of mouth, who is ultimately responsible in building that good reputation? Is it natural for us as humans to witness to others about the good or bad ways that we have been treated? Is a good reputation of a business dependant on the eloquence of the customer, or on the quality of the business' service? Why would Jesus want our witness? Who is on trial?
12. **1Corinthians 1:27** Being poorly educated, having a poor vocabulary, not knowing the Bible well enough, or feeling very uncomfortable; are these good excuses to reject our responsibility to witness?
13. **Luke 8:26-40** What did Jesus ask the demoniac to do? (v39) What did the demoniac want to do? (v38) Why do we so often want what this demoniac wanted? Why did Jesus send this demoniac home? Why did Jesus send him to witness to people he already knew? (What should our first goal be in witnessing to strangers?) In this example, what was the result? (When Jesus came back, multitudes flocked to Him because of this witnessing.)
14. **John 1:36-37, 40-51** Does Jesus know us before we follow Him? What is the goal of our witness? In any of these examples, is there any attention whatsoever on the quality of their witnessing? What is the focus?
15. **John 4:7, 16-19, 25-26, 28-30, 39-42** Does Jesus know us before we follow Him? Does Jesus want our witness even though we are sinners? Did these Samaritans trust Jesus because of the woman's witness? (v42) Why would Jesus orchestrate this situation in such a way that a sinner would be His witness? Notice that Jesus is not at all focused on the incredible problems of who we have been and the things we have done, or even the sin we are involved with now. He only wants to focus on the relationship we have with Him; the transformations He will work in us; the people we will become in Him, and our witness for Him.
16. **John 4:28, 31-38** What was the woman's priority; giving Jesus the drink He asked for, or telling everyone about Him? (v7, 28) Why would not Jesus rebuke her for this? Jesus' mission was to gain the trust of His lost, sinful children at His own expense. This circumstance was no exception. Jesus knew that these Samaritan's trust in Him was of infinitely more value than His own physical comfort. Jesus recognized trust in Himself to be a permanent provider of life and sustenance, whereas food and water were merely temporary, and not a true source of life. Therefore, Jesus had apparently strange priorities. Are the symbolic 'fields' of today still ripe for the harvest in the same capacity as they were back then? If we sow seed (spread the Word/witness), are we to expect to reap the grain ourselves? (v36-38; no) Does Jesus want us to follow the example He left us; sowing even though in most cases, we will not reap what we sow?
17. **2Corinthians 12:9** Why doesn't God use angels instead of us for witnessing?

Why not give His own testimony about Himself to all of us in person? After all, angels, not to mention God Himself, are infinitely more eloquent, knowledgeable, and authoritative than us. As we share what Jesus has done in our lives, we will be asked questions, which will cause us to gather more light (truth of His Word) to give right answers. This will benefit us at least as much as it benefits those who we share the light with. The best way to learn something is to teach it. As our confidence in God will increase, our recognition of our desperate need for Jesus will increase. Our confidence in ourselves apart from Jesus will decrease. This exactly what God needs to do to transform us into the kind of people that can go to heaven with Him. Witnessing will result in increased faith in the Lord. The amount that we witness is directly linked to the amount that we trust God. As we witness, we will gain confidence, not in ourselves, but in God. As we share the white (holiness) in our lives that Jesus exchanged for the black (sinfulness), we will thirst for more holiness. As we share the light (truth) that Jesus has exchanged for our darkness (lies), we will see the purpose for our lives being fulfilled. As we share the love that Jesus has exchanged for our hate, we will gain more and more confidence in the value of our witnessing, not because of our witnessing, but because of the One to whom our witnessing leads. As we share the Life that Jesus has exchanged for our death, the life that Jesus has given us will become more abundant. Joh 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing... Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Rom 1:16... I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth... 1Cor 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. Let us be fools to the world rather than strangers to God.

18. Luke 18:9-14 Would witnessing of Jesus welcome vulnerability and humility? Witnessing builds habits of humility.

19. Hebrews 2:9 (first question), **2Corinthians 3:18** What is the most majestic display of the glory of the Lord? Who does the converting/transformation? By what catalyst does the Spirit work transformation?

20. John 12:32-33 What event is the catalyst for conversion? What should be the primary focus of our witnessing?

21. Isaiah 43:4-8, 10-12 Why did God make us; what is our purpose in being alive? (v. 7) What have we learned is the primary display of the glory of the Lord? When we witness, what will be the result? (v.10) Jesus wanted to make His disciples fishers of men because He knows that this is the greatest work possible. There is no other more exalted employment, no matter how much money or social status is involved. Witnessing to others of Jesus is the most fulfilling, rewarding, and exciting adventure this life has to offer. When we get to heaven, what will give us greater pleasure than seeing those who are there specifically because God worked through us to win their hearts to Him? Witnessing may seem awkward at first, but when we give witnessing a chance, God will quickly show us that successful witnessing is not dependant on our skill or goodness, but on His skill and goodness. Most importantly, witnessing is to our souls what exercise is to our bodies. Witnessing is an essential part of our spiritual health. Without it, our spiritual life stagnates and dies. In the same way that no physical exercise whatsoever equals decay and eventual death to our physical body, no witnessing equals decay and eventual death to our soul. Besides sleeping, what is the best natural remedy for falling asleep at the wheel of a vehicle? (exercise) Christians fall asleep spiritually because they never exercise spiritually. So often we focus on everything but spiritual exercise when we sense that we are dying spiritually. We can change our diet and think positively, but if we neglect exercise, we will die slowly. Lets say that you won an all expenses paid trip to anywhere in the world with \$100,000 spending money. But there is one catch. You must find 12 other people to take with you within a week, or you can't go either. What would you do? Give up because it will take effort to find 12 people in such a short time? – Of course not. You would immediately begin searching out the 12 people. How persistent would you be in contacting people to find each one of the 12 people you need? I am sure you would be incredibly diligent. How valuable is your soul? Is it worth more than a few bucks? – more than a million bucks? – more than all the money and 'stuff' in the universe? How much value did Jesus place on your soul – what price did He pay for your soul? How valuable is the soul of the person you love the most in this world? How valuable is the souls of every one of our brothers and sisters on this planet? Are they worth more than \$100,000 and a worldly vacation? All around us are bleeding, suffering perishing souls, many of whom are ready to reap – ready to finally admit their need of Jesus. God has been working with them all their lives, and now He needs you to reach out to them on His behalf. You are on a bus riding down the highway, riding along and pondering about the cares and pleasures of your life. Suddenly you are torn away from your thoughts by someone next to you saying “Whoah!” You look to see what has got their attention, and outside the window, on the side of the highway up ahead, you see what is immediately evident to be a vehicle accident. You see a semi-truck overturned on the side of the highway, and one car has stopped nearby on the side of the road with its four way flashers blinking. People have gotten out of the car and are looking for ways to help. You think to yourself – “Well, it's a good thing other people have stopped to help – I am sure they will take care of it. I know this bus won't be stopping to help, so I can't really do anything anyway.” As the bus is about to pass the scene of the accident and drive on, you notice an overturned car further up in the ditch that you had not seen before. You notice that it is in a dangerous position and is very smashed up. But as you look closer, you are immediately struck with panic. Without a fraction of hesitation, you jump up, and run to the front of the bus shouting “Stop the bus! Stop the bus!!!” The driver looks back at you in the mirror and says to you “Relax; - calm down, there is no need to panic. Why should I stop the bus?” Frantically, you reply “That's my sister out there, and if you don't stop this bus, I am going to jump out!” If only we recognized that every soul out there that is dying without Jesus is our inestimably precious brother or sister in Christ, and that they were meant for life, not death, we would not say to ourselves “Well, it's a good thing other people have stopped to help – I am sure they will take care of it. I can't really do anything anyway.” We need to be far more earnest in telling people about the priceless vacation that God has in mind for us; exploring the universe for eternity with our Creator, particularly because those who don't come are not just missing out on a vacation, or dying in a car accident; they are missing out on eternal life! In reality, we are living in a spiritual war-zone where our brothers and sisters are wounded and bleeding to death all around us. Is it time to sit back and relax? Is there anything more important to do in the whole world than striving to save and bring as many people with us as possible?

sun, moon, and stars (God's lights)	= woman/seed of the woman (God's people; Gen 3:15, 22:17, 37:9, Psa 89:35-37)
The purpose of the sun, moon, and stars?	= to give light upon the earth (Gen 1:17; ye are the light of the world...Mat 5:14)
Sun (of Righteousness) = Jesus (Mal 4:2)	= Jesus; Word (Joh 1)
Word = light/truth (Psa 119:105, Joh 17:17)	= Ten Commandments; lamp; light (Prov 6:23)

Conclusion: Witnessing is to our soul what exercising is to our body. We need to incorporate witnessing into our lives in order to not allow our spiritual health to fade into spiritual death. After being reconciled to God ourselves, witnessing is the purpose of our lives. It is the only way to achieve true happiness and fulfilled purpose in our lives.

APPEAL: Rom 10:14-17 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Is it your desire to be the missionary that God has called you to be? You can either go on fishing trips or live a life devoted to fishing for men. Which one has God inspired you to do?