

AUGUST FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Avoiding Atrophy

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BEGINNING THOUGHTS...

"If you keep making those faces, you're going to grow like that!"

Have you ever been told these words or said them to someone? It's a fact: repeat something enough times and it becomes permanent. I've seen people in nursing homes with braces on their hands or feet—twisted from non-movement, necks propped on their chest from holding their heads down, or entire bodies unable to do anything due to unused muscles. Atrophy occurs, and it doesn't take very long for it to happen. Therapists train to work with these folks in hopes that rehabilitation will take place. Some patients improve; others aren't so fortunate. Irreversible damage results from lack of muscle use over prolonged periods of time.

Want your body in this shape? No one would if given a choice. With anything we do, we make choices. We can choose to do right things that benefit us or wrong things that harm us. God gave us free will. Every day, life is a combination of choices. Do I exercise or eat the extra cookie? Do I read my Bible or play games on the computer? Do I go to church Wednesday night or to the ball field? These are just random things; insert whatever you wish. But, you get the point. I'm thankful God didn't make us robots, but it probably would have been a lot less easier for Him if He had. He has to work extra hard on some folks because we refuse to do things that are good, things the Bible tells us, things that are right.

We busy ourselves with hundreds of choices every day; but if we leave out God, those decisions are useless. When I think about what Christ did for me at Calvary, I want to do everything in my power to keep my spiritual life from becoming useless. Atrophy on any level for Christians is unacceptable. You have a purpose, a plan, a program for your life that only you can fulfill. God will give you what you need—tools that enable you to live life with heaven in mind, while accomplishing goals here on earth. Don't let your heart become hardened from lack of spiritual exercise. Use it to grow, improve and expand your service. You can only benefit if you actually *do* something. The study this month will help you to rejoice, trust, think and do—all action words that will increase your heart muscle tone.

Avoiding Atrophy

MOVEMENT ONE: REJOICE

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Avoid spiritual atrophy by rejoicing in the Lord—always.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice”*
(*Philippians 4:4*).

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card. Memorize it this week, or if you know it, say every morning when you first get up.
- Go over *Treasure*, p. 35, and share one of your answers.
- Do you have things to rejoice about? Name some. (*life itself, faithful husband, children, precious granddaughter, my church, friends, etc.*)
- By the end of this lesson, see if your list has grown.
- Why were Paul and Silas in jail? (*They had healed a girl from evil spirits—Acts 16:16, 18-23.*)
- Read verse 19 again. Notice it says, “the hope of their gains was gone.” These men lost their money maker. What had she done for them? (*Fortunetelling-soothsaying*)
- Why was this wrong? (*It’s a work of the flesh—Galatians 5:19-21; Daniel 2:27; 5:7, 8; Micah 5:12.*)
- Did Paul and Silas fear the girl or her owners? (*No, they wanted to rid her of the evil spirits.*)
- How were they able to accomplish this? (*Through God—Acts 19:11-12.*)
- How could Paul and Silas rejoice so vigorously while in prison? (*They knew God would take care of them—Romans 5:2.*)
- Do you rejoice in the good times and the bad times? Should we? (*1 Peter 4:12-13; Romans 14:17; Philippians 4:11*)
- How do we possess this type of continuing joy? (*By abiding in Christ—John 15:11, 17:13; Hebrews 12:2.*)
- What is atrophy? (*A decrease in the mass of muscles or a complete wasting away of the muscle; weakening or degeneration, especially from lack of use.*)
- Could some forms of depression be an atrophy of joy? How might this be revised? (*By choosing to rejoice—Isaiah 25:9; Habakkuk 3:18-19; 2 Corinthians 6:10; Matthew 5:12.*)
- Does God rejoice? (*Yes; read Zephaniah 3:17. He is active in everything He does.*)

COOL DOWN: Close with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for how God nourishes your soul.

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MOVEMENT TWO: TRUST

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Avoid spiritual atrophy by trusting in God, without worry, and committing every situation to Him in prayer.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6).*

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card and memorize it this week.
- Are you a worrier? What does it do for you? (*Worry leaves us frustrated, puzzled and bewildered by life; it can also make us sick.*)
- What does Paul tell us in the first part of Philippians 4:6? (*Be careful for nothing—or have no anxiety about anything.*)
- Why does he tell us this? (*To warn us, because worrying is a sign of unbelief, and unbelief is a sin.*)
- What are we to do instead? (*TRUST—Psalm 37:3; Isaiah 50:10.*)
- In what do you place your trust? (*Your bank account, the stock market, your possessions, your friends, your family?*)
- Could any of these things fail you?
- Who will never fail you or leave you? (*Jesus—Hebrews 13:5.*)
- Write these verses in your journal—to have when you need to be reminded of the Lord’s trust. (*Proverbs 3:5; Isaiah 26:4; Psalm 37:5; 118:8*)
- God promises certain things when we trust Him. Name some of these. (*1) Mercy—Psalm 32:10; (2) Safety—Proverbs 29:25; (3) Peace—Isaiah 26:3; (4) Goodness—Psalm 31:9; (5) Salvation—Isaiah 12:2.*)
- The Bible gives many examples of people trusting God in unusual circumstances. Name a few. (*1) Abraham—Genesis 22:7-13; (2) Noah—Genesis 6:6-8, 17-18; (3) Mary, mother of Jesus—Luke 1:30-35; (4) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—Daniel 3:12-25.*)
- What will happen if we don’t trust God? (*Our hearts can become hardened—Mark 8:17-21; Jeremiah 5:3.*)
- How long will God’s truth and trust last? (*Forever, to all generations—Psalm 100.*)

COOL DOWN: Sing the suggested songs. Dismiss in prayer, asking God to help you trust Him more.

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MOVEMENT THREE: THINK

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Avoid spiritual atrophy through right thinking, focusing on things true, pure, honorable and uplifting.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card and in your journal to work on memorizing.
- Go over questions and answers in *Treasure*, p. 39.
- Have you ever gone into a room and not remembered why you were there? (*I have.*)
- How does this make you feel? (*Don’t worry, I think it’s fairly normal.*)
- Our minds are so complex. Sometimes we get so much on them, it’s hard to process everything. Do you agree or disagree?
- Read the Core Development verse again aloud. This is a wonderful verse to read every day just to remind ourselves of what we should think.
- What are *true* things? (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 John 5:20; John 7:28. What are *honest* things? (Luke 8:15; 2 Corinthians 13:7.) What are *just* things? (Isaiah 26:7; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.) What are *pure* things? (Psalm 119:140; Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 12:6.) What are *lovely* things? (Song of Solomon 5:16; Psalm 149:4; 1 Peter 3:4.) What are *things of good report*? (Good tidings; faith—Proverbs 15:30; Hebrews 11:1, 2.) What is *virtue*? (Moral excellence; goodness—Luke 8:46; 2 Peter 1:3,5.) Can you *praise* the Lord? (Hebrews 2:12,13,15; Psalm 148:14; 48:1; 96:4; 1 Chronicles 16:25; Psalm 72:15; 113:3; John 9:24.)
- What is an attribute? (“A quality or characteristic inherent in or ascribed to someone or something”—AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY.)
- God has many attributes. Name some of them. (*Wise, infinite, sovereign, holy, faithful, loving, self-existent, immutable, good, gracious.*)
- When we consider the character of God, we often think of three main attributes. Write these in your journal along with the Scriptures. (1) **Omnipotence:** all powerful—Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37; (2) **Omniscience:** all knowing—John 21:7; Acts 1:24; 1 John 3:20; (3) **Omnipresence:** present everywhere—Psalm 139:8; Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 66:1; Jeremiah 13:24.
- COOL DOWN:** Sing or read the words to “How Great, Thou Art”, *REJOICE!* p. 2. Dismiss in prayer, thanking God for His greatness.

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MOVEMENT FOUR: DO

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Avoid spiritual atrophy by doing good things.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Philippians 4:9).*

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card and in your journal. Work on memorizing it this week.
- Go over *Treasure*, p. 41, and share answers.
- What part of speech is the word, “Do”? (*A verb—an action word.*)
- In your daily life, will you get anything done by staying in bed all day? (*No, you have to get up and get moving—unless you’re ill and can’t.*)
- Do our mind and heart determine the things that our body does? (*Yes.*)
- Why is the heart so important in our actions? (*(1) It controls speech—Luke 6:45; (2) It determines character—Proverbs 23:7; (3) It should be guarded—Proverbs 4:23; (4) It’s the source of faith—Romans 10:10; (5) It’s the source of evil—Matthew 15:18.*)
- Has anyone ever done something special for you? How did it make you feel?
- Is it easy to return that goodness?
- Have you ever heard the saying, “Put feet to your prayers”? What does that mean to you? (*James 2:17-18*)
- Even Paul had a difficult time with what he knew he should do, whether it was good deeds or good living. Read Romans 7:18-21.
- How did he solve this dilemma? (*By walking after the spirit—Romans 8:1-6.*)
- Is there balance in your life of actions and love? (*Actions/work—1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 1 Timothy 6:18; Matthew 5:16; Love—John 13:35; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:12.*)
- What word is noticeable in the Golden Rule? (*DO unto others, as you would have them DO unto you.*)
- Are we responsible for our actions unto God and others?

COOL DOWN: Read the COOL DOWN section on p. 41. Dismiss in prayer, asking God not to let your spiritual life atrophy. Pray for guidance, wisdom, and strength to be a “doer” in the kingdom of God.

IN CLOSING...

Jesus came to teach others how to live. True, God's plan of salvation designed for Him to come, but in so doing, we gained knowledge of much more than a way to live eternally. Now we can pray, worship, read our Bibles, encourage others, rejoice, have peace, be comforted and enjoy life on earth as He meant for us. It is a deliberate choice of the will to think positively in every situation and to refuse to dwell on the negative. This does take effort. But we have the tools in our belts to do this. Philippians 4:8 gives us the answer to every obstacle or pressure in our path. We just have to exert the effort to wrap our mind around this verse. Ladies, this is why we encourage Scripture memorization. This exercise can keep the atrophy at bay in your life.