



This is the *Health Matters* podcast.

Eclectically-Interested, Eclectically-Involved with Stephanie Nickel

I'm your host Kimberley Payne and this is the show for women who want to improve their spiritual and physical health.



This week we're going to be talking with Stephanie Nickel. Stephanie is a freelance writer and editor, regular contributor to [HopeStreamRadio](http://HopeStreamRadio.com), labour doula, and former personal trainer. Steph is eclectically-interested and eclectically-involved. She had the privilege of co-authoring Paralympian Deb Willows' memoir, [Living Beyond My Circumstances](http://LivingBeyondMyCircumstances.com), and blogs about a number of topics. Steph is an active member of The Word Guild and InScribe Christian Writers' Fellowship. Steph lives with her husband of over 30 years in Southwestern Ontario and has three grown children—and will soon welcome a daughter-in-law to the family. Visit her on her website: <http://stephbethnickel.com/> Welcome Stephanie.

Stephanie

Glad to be here Kimberley.

Kimberley

I'm so glad to have you as the first guest on the Health Matters podcast. We've known each other for many years and you're a regular contributor on health and fitness topics for my blog since 2013.

Stephanie

It's wonderful to do this together. I enjoy it.

Kimberley

We've known each other through The Word Guild and we're both members of Inscribe Fellowship as well. I'm just tickled that you're my first guest today.

Stephanie

I was very excited to be your first so I'll do my best to answer your questions.

Kimberley

Wonderful. The title of your session is, "Eclectically-Interested, Eclectically-Involved". Why did you choose that title?

Stephanie

Well I think we as Christian women, women in general, are very very busy no matter what stage of life we're at and I just think it's a whole lot nicer to call it eclectically-interested and eclectically-involved rather than just plain scattered.

Kimberley

I love it, yeah. A lot of times I feel very ADD.

Stephanie

We didn't have that title when we were growing up but you know I prefer to call it the Butterfly Syndrome – we flit from one thing to the next. I think it's more positive.

Kimberley

Oh yeah, I like that, the Butterfly Syndrome. We're here to talk about spiritual and physical health so why do you think exercise and healthy eating are important for the Christian woman?

Stephanie

Healthy eating and exercise have so many benefits. You and I, having both been personal trainers, understand some of those medical things. Some of the things that are just true if we get enough exercise anyway no matter who we are. We have more energy, we sleep better, we work more efficiently, we get things done more quickly. And whether you're a Christian woman or not these things are really important.

I know from the flip side of things if you spend too much time worrying about your dress size or what the scale says or obsessing that you're not getting enough exercise it can have negative effects. But there are so many positives that I just think it's part of being a good steward of the body that God gave us. And while we're here on earth we do things with our bodies. We know we need to go here and there, and we need to stay as healthy and strong as we can. Although we can't ward off every disease that comes our way, we all know that—you and I both have a little frog in our throat today—but the whole day if we exercise regularly our body, our immune system works better and can fend these things off. Most of us realize, especially when we get to be women of a certain age, that sleep doesn't always come as well as maybe it did in the past and it'd be nice to know that if we exercise regularly (well

probably not right before bed is a good idea) then we'll sleep better and be awake more and fresh and ready to face the challenges of our day.

Eating well is really the same thing because if we eat foods that weigh us down and make us feel slow and sluggish then we won't be able to work as efficiently as we want to, our minds won't be as sharp as they should be, and it's really hard to get those things done that God has given us to do in a day if we're not fueling our bodies in the way we should and keeping them moving like we ought to.

Kimberley

I really like that term, that we're "stewards" of our bodies. I think that's really important because I'm thinking about stewardship in a number of areas. We're stewards with our finances, with our kids but really importantly we're stewards with our bodies and we do need to take care of them.

We opened with being eclectic and being busy and the Butterfly Syndrome, how can busy women find time to tend to their spiritual and physical health?

Stephanie

That is a giant challenge. I could probably make a fortune if I could give you the one-size-fits-all answer. One thing I learned back in Bible college, from one of my English professors actually, she heard of an exercise where another teacher had commissioned his students with writing down every minute of every day what they did for an entire week. It would be tedious but it would be very doable. But then after that they looked at the list of so-called priorities that they had made and then they compared it to the time they had spent on each different area during the week and realized it was flipped on its head. The things they said were most important actually got the least amount of attention and vice versa. So I think the first thing we need to do is realize we won't ever find the time to do what's important, we have to make it. We have to choose our priorities well and if, as Christians, we want to put the Lord first in ministry and family and those things that we say are important to us—prayer, Bible study, all of those things—then we're going to have to schedule our day in such a way that that can happen. Because if we just get up and start running as soon as our feet hit the ground it's likely that enough things will come to distract us that those things that we really do want to be most important in our life just won't fit in our schedule.

It's important to maybe get up an hour early if you're a morning person and can make that happen. Or stay up just a little longer after your family is all tucked in for the night and do those things which are important. Capture those moments during the day. We all have those little times during the day where we're waiting in line or we're on hold on the telephone or something like that where we can offer up even a brief prayer, where we can pray for the people around us instead of letting our mind race to the next 10 things we've got to do. It's not easy to prioritize but I think it's crucial if we're going to fit everything into our schedule. And then the idea comes that there are only 24 hours in each day and there's going to have to be some things that we let go of. It's too easy to let go of those things that are truly important to us and thinking, "I'll get around to that next week, or next month, or next year". We

have to make it happen today and let go of some of those things that we think are important but maybe they're not quite as important as we deemed them to be.

Kimberley

That's quite the challenge. I was just thinking that if I had to track every single minute, wow. For a business, I know that there is software called TraxTime or things like that so that it's easy for people to bill. For example, they'll say I'm working on this for a certain amount of time. It would be really interesting to track every single minute of time of the day. I think it would be very convicting. Because, like you said, we don't find time we make time. I think that would be a very interesting exercise to do. Maybe I'll do it as a Facebook challenge sometime.

Stephanie

Yeah, even for just a couple of days.

Kimberley

Track every single minute, wow. Now quiet time doesn't look the same for all Christians. How does it look for you?

Stephanie

I'm going to be totally honest here, it's been hit and miss over the years far too often. There were times, oddly enough, when I had three small children at home and my husband was working very long hours that was maybe one of the best times in my private devotional life. He would get up to deliver the London Free Press. He would set the alarm for 2:30 in the morning. And there were times that I woke up in the night and I spent time reading the Bible and praying. I didn't always wake up but there was a long stretch then that my family was sound asleep at that time. That wasn't an ongoing way of doing things.

Some people are very structured. I'm not. I like a flexible schedule from day to day. I like there to be changes in my routine. But these days I'm coming to know what works for me. There is an online Facebook Challenge called The One-Minute Prayer and the point is the first week of the year you commit to praying one minute every day. Any of us can do that. But at the end of the year, as we steadily increase the amount of time that we pray, I'll be praying for an hour every day. Which is great. But I find because my mind flits from thing to thing, as does my attention, I find that if I type out my prayers in a prayer journal it is much better for me because I keep focussed, I can pour out my heart to the Lord and I don't think He minds whether we're kneeling beside our bed with our hands folded or whether we're sitting at our desk. If we're focussed on Him and taking our needs and the needs of others to Him then I think that's just fine.

As far as reading my Bible and doing my Bible study and reading God's word goes, it's really cool because as a regular contributor to HopeStreamRadio I'm writing devotionals for them. One of the things that is wonderful about that is as I dig into God's word very familiar passages, something that either stands out or that I haven't thought of in a very long time and God reminds me how amazing His

word is. Or there'll be something new that never really caught my attention in the past and so as I'm preparing to do these devotionals I'm digging into God's word and I'm learning new things.

Reading a devotional to get your day started and get you on the way is fantastic but I don't think there's anything like really meditating on God's word and really studying. It's not just reading a few verses and running off to our day. That's important and that's a good way to start but we need to set aside that time when we dig into God's word and really learn what it has to say.

Kimberley

Right now I'm part of a challenge, I love these Facebook challenges, where we're challenged to read the book of Proverbs in the month of April. So every single day we read a proverb. April 1st we read Proverbs 1, April 2nd we read Proverbs 2 etc. It's a great challenge because you are accountable to other people because everyone is reading the same proverb. And then we get a discussion going about, "How did you feel about that" or "What did you think that?" and you're right, it's something that becomes part of my day. I start with the book of Proverbs in the morning so I'm ready to go through the day.

Now you also mentioned the [One-Minute Prayer](#). Is that an open group that anyone can get involved with on Facebook?

Stephanie

I can check. The contact person is Susan Harris and I'm sure that anyone who wants to get involved is more than welcome to join. I'm just not sure at this moment what the setting is for the group. But I'm sure the more the merrier. She does set out themes for the day and we do or don't have to follow those themes but it does give good inspiration and a good springboard for our prayer life.

Kimberley

I'll definitely put a link in the show notes for the One-Minute Prayer Facebook group.

Stephanie

That's great. I'll get that to you.

Kimberley

You also mentioned HopeStreamRadio which I'm also a contributor to. I do Fit Tips every Friday. Tell us a little bit about HopeStreamRadio.

Stephanie

The president of FBH International, a missions organization, is Ron Hughes. And FBH is behind HopeStreamRadio. I met Ron several years ago at a Write Canada conference actually and we stayed connected over the years to varying degrees. And when he got in touch with me by telephone to know if anyone would like to contribute, if I would like to contribute. It's a podcast that runs daily. As you know Monday to Friday there is programming that goes in a steady loop. And obviously the more contributors

they get, the longer the programming will be and the fewer loops they'll have in a day. It goes out all around the world which is absolutely phenomenal and amazing in this cyber age that we live in. Saturday some of the highlights of the week have been pulled together to make the program schedule. And Sunday there's a lot of more music and a lot of messages. And sort of what you would consider old Sunday programming for the radio or for the television. It's great. It's going out and sharing anything from fit tips to devotionals to classroom recordings from theologians and theology teachers which is really great. There's information on finances and family life. It's amazing. They're building, as you know, they're building a bigger and bigger contributor base and it's so much fun to be part of. There are some things in your life that you just know that God said, "I want you to be part of this" and for me this is one of those things.

Kimberley

Communing with God, talking with God, doesn't just mean saying our prayers. Where and when do you feel closest to God and listen to the Lord?

Stephanie

That's a great question because I'm not saying I hear voices but as I dig into God's word, He speaks to us through His word. It's referred to as the Living Word, so we learn what it means in context but also I remember one time way back I was sitting in a group of thousands of people who would've called themselves Christian but the guest speaker was covering a very controversial topic which I didn't agree with personally and all of these scriptures that I didn't even know that I had memorized, I was just familiar with them, I felt like they were coming to mind. It felt like there was a whole flood of these scriptures coming to mind and running over themselves. We need to get into God's word and study it because as King David said in the Psalms, he hid God's word in his heart, he wouldn't sin against Him. We need to know that word.

It's not just reading and studying. You and I both know what it's like to grab our camera and to go out for a photo walk and in the book of Romans it says that God has made Himself known through His creation. When I'm looking at His creation through the lens of a camera, and I love what's called macro-photography up close and personal shots. It doesn't make for very good exercise because my walk is stopped, I move an inch and it's a new picture. But it's a great way to get out and be refreshed and clear my mind and to look through that lens and all of a sudden instead of cares and worries or a destination I'm just focussed on that one little thing that shows God's incredible creativity. I feel particularly close to Him and in awe. Some people do that when they're on their knees gardening. It's not my thing and in fact we call all the flower gardens "my husband's flowers" and "my husband's garden" because he loves to do that. But you get me a camera and you get me out walking in God's creation and I'm a very happy young woman. Not so young anymore, but I feel young when I'm out taking pictures I feel young and full of life.

Kimberley

We have so much in common Stephanie. I actually had taken so many pictures that were close-ups I wanted to start a blog called "Macro Girl".

Stephanie

That's really cool! I had an idea for an e-book, not that anyone buys the old coffee table books anymore, but I wanted to create one with my pictures called "Life through the Lens". We'll just have to see what happens in the future with that. Bible sayings and inspirational sayings and pictures I've taken.

Kimberley

That would be beautiful.

Okay, are you ready now for our BEEP round?

Stephanie

Well we will see just how prepared I am.

Kimberley

Alright. Stephanie will give quick tips on the four disciplines of Bible study, eating healthy, exercise, and prayer or BEEP. This is our BEEP round.

Stephanie

I like it. Very creative.

Kimberley

What tip do you have for us for Bible study?

Stephanie

Read familiar passages slowly and carefully; you never know when the Holy Spirit will give you new insight.

Kimberley

Excellent. And eating healthy quick tip?

Stephanie

One of the benefits of healthy eating is the psychological boost that comes from knowing we're doing something good for ourselves. Even before we see results, eating healthy is good for us.

Kimberley

And exercise?

Stephanie

As women of a certain age, as I mentioned before, we might think that rapid physical decline is part of a given. It doesn't have to be if we include regular cardio and resistance training to our regular schedules.

Kimberley

And finally, your quick tip for prayer?

Stephanie

I think the best way to start our day is to commit it to the Lord even before we crawl out of bed in the morning. I think that's the very best way to start.

Kimberley

That's fantastic.

Thanks again to Stephanie Nickel for her expert advice and thank you for joining us today.

This interview has been brought to you by [Fit for Faith—a 7 week program to improve spiritual & physical health](#). You can discover more about this book and other health programs at www.kimberleypayne.com.

If you liked this episode please help spread the word by leaving a rating and review on iTunes.

This has been the Health Matters Podcast, believing that prayer & Bible study are to the spirit what exercise and healthy eating are to the body.

Blessings on your journey to health.

About Kimberley Payne

Kimberley Payne is the host of the *Health Matters – Healthy Spirit Healthy Body* podcast. She is author of *Fit for Faith – a 7-week program to improve spiritual and physical health* and is a motivational speaker offering workshops and online courses based on her book. She hopes to inspire women to live happier, healthier lives that glorify God. She is happily married and lives with her husband in a village east of Toronto, Canada where she hikes and bikes. Visit her website at www.kimberleypayne.com

