



This is the *Health Matters* podcast.

What Does It Mean to Be “GodFit”? with John Hayden

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

In this episode, we’ll be talking about how fitness relates to our relationship with God and how our ability to be a servant for His kingdom is crucial for discipleship.



This week we’re going to be talking with John Hayden. John is a certified fitness professional that has a wide range of experience training clients such as professional athletes, adults, youth, and children. As a former collegiate athlete, John’s passion for fitness and wellness has been an integral part of his life. His approach to fitness is humble. Stay fit to SERVE others. You can reach John at his website www.godfit.com. Welcome John.

John

Thank you Kimberley.

Kimberley

So tell me, right off the bat, what does it mean to be GodFit?

John

GodFit is a 6-week training program and devotional combined in order to pursue how God is calling you to serve. The main purpose of the program is to figure out how God can use your spiritual and physical fitness in order to serve others.

Kimberley

That sounds interesting. So now how does staying physically fit encourage discipleship?

John

There are a couple of different things that I'd like to point out with this. Fitness is a big component. Fitness is not just muscle, it's not just your lungs, it's not just your heart. It's your whole mentality; how you want to use your body. So when we look at fitness as discipleship we got to look at it in ways that God can use us to serve others. And one of the biggest reasons is that we aren't really aware of what God wants us to do. Part of that is due to confidence. One of things of this program really tries to hit on is understanding what does God really need us to do from a discipleship standpoint and how can I share His love.

One of the things that I'm a big believer in is that serving others is one of the best ways to showcase God's love. We're given numerous examples in the Bible where Jesus portrayed how to do it. Understanding what we have to do as Christians to live that out. And fitness is a big part of that. It enables us, it gives us confidence to make decisions on what we can and can't do. And if you look at discipleship from that standpoint there's more opportunities granted because we're able to serve others in a bigger capacity.

Kimberley

I was just reading the passage in the Bible where the two disciples said to Jesus remember us so that we can sit beside you in your kingdom. And Jesus says, well no, we need to serve.

So how does staying spiritually fit encourage discipleship?

John

That is one of the most simple concepts in GodFit and one of the most hardest things to attain. It really comes down to knowledge. For us to feel confident to show God's love we really need to know what the truth is. The only way to know the truth is to focus on different ways to communicate with Jesus.

The 6-week program is founded on 6 disciplines that enable us to have a better relationship with God. The 6 disciplines in GodFit that we focus on in each of the different weeks go from solitude, meditation, prayer, simplicity, study, and service. So over the course of the 6 weeks you're constantly focusing on understanding how God calls us to serve, focusing on those different spiritual disciplines and understanding our relationship with God and also building on that. All the meanwhile, you're also working out, exercising more than you may have before you started and start to build some momentum in understanding how God wants to use me. So spiritual discipline is one of the main components of GodFit and one of the most well-received components of the book that I have here. It makes you communicate in different ways. Outside of prayer and outside of reading the Bible solitude and meditation are absolutely integral in our understanding of what God needs us to do.

Kimberley

So, sorry, can you repeat those six disciplines again.

John

Yeah absolutely. Week one focuses on solitude. Basically that's the state of being alone in the flesh but in the company of God. Basically you're isolated and letting God talk to you. You're not reading the Bible, you're not having anything in front of you. You're just trying to absorb what you need to get in front of you.

Week 2 focuses on meditation which I label as the silent pursuit of obedience through the Word. So now you're picking some stories, you're focusing on some dialogue in the Bible, and you're trying really to figure it out and how does that relate to me at this point in my life.

Week 3 focuses on prayer. Now is the first opportunity to respond with communication through worship with God.

Week 4 then transforms into simplicity. A state without worry or distractions. You're trying to limit what is filling your life and limiting your ability to connect with God, to connect with your body from a fitness standpoint and try to live a simpler life.

Week 5 we go into study. The pursuit of the truth. In order to feel confident and be a disciple and spiritual wellness we need to know what the Bible says and we need to understand it and week 5 focuses on that.

Finally week 6 focuses on service. Putting others in your best interest. Week 6 basically wraps up the program from the standpoint of I've pursued how God's calling me to serve and I'm going to finish the program with a wrap up service. With a service project with the group you may have done the program with or as an individual. Whatever God calls you to do. The final step is service.

So those are the 6 disciplines in the book.

Kimberley

I like how you said, "Meditation is the silent pursuit of obedience". I like that, that's interesting. That's one of the things I've been working on is meditation. Trying to slow things down so I can hear God.

John

It's a lost art. It's something that I've experienced a few times. Same with solitude. Especially the last few years that I've been working on this book and it really just changes the game on how you approach reading the Bible or even praying. When you break it down and allow God to work through that and take a break from your mind and let God fill yours with His thoughts. It's a very cool experience.

Kimberley

How did you come to write this book?

John

In the summer of 2012, I was at my local church in Columbus Indiana, and the pastor started speaking on identifying your platform to be a disciple, understanding what it is and ultimately trying to own it. That really slapped me in the face.

I'm a health professional at a club in town that has over 1000 members and I have no idea if any of them knew I was a believer or that I went to church down the street. I found I got real convicted to use my talent as a fitness professional to create a program that allows churches to identify that fitness is a good part of being a Christian. You need to be fit in order to live out the acts that God called us to do.

So that's when I started down this road and started a program and started putting some workouts together. I spoke with my church and they allowed me to run a pilot-study program in January 2013. Since then it's kind of just snowballed into what it is now and I'm proud to say that it's a published case of work as of March 30th this year. So after years of studying and working on the program and taking groups through it and now here we are. But it all started with God calling me and identifying what my platform was and being able to use it to serve the kingdom.

Kimberley

That is very exciting. Is this something that an individual can do by themselves or is it a group program? Do they have to have somebody lead them?

John

Yeah, so what I focused hard on was to try and make it kind of exactly what you described. Individuals can get it and run it on their own, you don't have to go out in a group. But I kind of wrote it as a small group breakout. The way I've ran it for multiple churches in town, where I'm from, and across the country is anywhere from 15 to 20 people going through the program at once. And so when they do it together, they work out once a week together and go over the spiritual devotions once together. And then they also complete the program with a service project. There's been hundreds of people that have gone through the program, a lot of individuals and a lot of groups, so it's kind of formatted for both.

What's unique about the program is that I got the dot com with a video archive on it so that all the exercises that are listed in the training component of this book can be accessed on GodFit.com. So when you get your book, there's a passcode in it you can just type that in and you can watch a video demonstration of all the exercises that are listed in the workouts. GodFit.com is more of a resource that pairs with the book.

So if you're a motivated exercise enthusiast already and this sounds like an opportunity to do with your small group you can now lead the program through learning through GodFit.com and follow the leadership guide in the back of the book with study questions and things to bring to workouts, what to prepare for and from a leadership standpoint get your mind right with what God is calling you to do with this program. The more I talk to people in different churches across the country the more I realize how many people are interested in fitness but just don't have a model or purpose with how to use it. And that's one thing that I resolved really well with the program. Whether you're an individual or small group leader or participant in a church program you can be used in any way that God calls as long as you're willing to obey. Individuals, small groups, church groups—anybody can do the program. I even had a few clubs offer the program to their members as well which is really cool. Now that brings another opportunity for discipleship into a public platform.

Kimberley

Talking about bring discipleship into a public platform how have you seen God work through GodFit already?

John

When I first started the program, the logo that I have for the book I patched on some shirts for everybody in the program because it's going to make people look at it. And when we did that in the club that I worked for it was just amazing to get the response from people wondering what is GodFit. Now there's a question for you to answer. You know it's just an opportunity for me to get in shape spiritually and physically in order to serve love throughout the community. It's been a very neat answer to reply just from wearing the shirts around and that's led to multiple churches doing groups and multiple people from the club who maybe are not connected to a church or a believer do the program. Because fitness is something everybody needs whether you're a believer or not you need to take care of your body. It's been a very cool way to slightly introduce what does it mean to be fit and how can that be used for God's kingdom. So from a discipleship standpoint it kind of breaks the ice for people who are interested in fitness but who may not know the Lord.

Kimberley

I love it. I was just reading in Acts about Paul and how he got common ground first with people before he started to talk about the gospel. I think that's a really good way to do that is to have the common ground of fitness and physical health and then move into talking about spiritual health as well.

We're going to move on to the BEEP round. John will give quick tips on the four disciplines of Bible study, eating healthy, exercise, and prayer or BEEP. So what do you have for us for a quick tip for Bible study?

John

One thing that I've learned is that exercise is one of those things you can make excuses for really quick. And same with Bible study. It's really easy to push it off to the side and say "I'll do it later and come back to it" but it never happens and you just get on this train of never doing it.

So my tip for Bible study is to combine it with another activity. That's what GodFit does. It combines your Bible study and spiritual disciplines with exercise. So at the bottom of each of the workouts in the program there's an opportunity for you to engage in spiritual behaviour. And so my tip is to find out what activity you'd like to combine your Bible study with.

And that can be anything. It doesn't have to be a very specific 15-20 minutes carved out of your day time always. It can go along with different things that you are doing from the standpoint of being efficient. And that's what this world craves. It needs efficiency, it needs simplicity. It needs to be able to do it in a—I don't want to say easy fashion—but at the same time that's what I do want to say because it's harder and harder to carve out specific moments all the time for your Bible study. So if you can combine it with another activity that you're already going to be doing or interested in doing you can kill two birds with one stone. And I found that with the GodFit program specifically bringing those two

components together has only made the relationship sweeter because now there's more active worship going on.

Kimberley

I like it. And your quick tip on eating healthy?

John

The quick tip to eating healthy is to understand your sugar consumption. I think sugar is something that isn't talked about enough in our society. It's everywhere and it's hard to escape. And a lot of people don't understand how much sugar they actually consume. That's playing a huge factor in the obesity epidemic that we're dealing with as a country, as a world, because sugar is in everything. There's a lot of sugar that is added in most of the grocery store items that you can purchase and so it's important for everybody to understand their sugars. The obvious sugars in a candy bar or pop or candy are just so obvious. But what's killing us and getting us out of shape is all the sugar that's added to things that we don't think sugar is playing a part in. So just getting an idea of how sugar is playing a part in your life is really important to eating healthy.

Kimberley

And your quick tip for exercise?

John

The key to exercise is having proper motivation. You've got to understand why you're exercising. The one thing I hit hard a lot at GodFit is knowing that the purpose to be fit is God calls us to be fit. He's got opportunities lined up for us to take action and serve and are we ready to do that? If we can answer that question and have proper purpose and motivation for exercise all the things we think we want exercise for from the standpoint of weight loss, medication reduction—things like that—that'll all be taken of through faith if our purpose is on God. So having proper motivation is the key to exercise.

Kimberley

Love it. And finally your quick tip for prayer?

John

Quick tip for prayer is to have others in mind. It's so easy for individuals, like myself included, to pray for things going on in my life without really being observant to what's going on in others' lives. If we can focus on serving others and having others first prayer can be so much sweeter. And having a journal to write those down and those requests and truly show compassion for others. That's my tip for prayer. It's way easy to get wrapped up in our own lives when there are others who really need our help. And prayer is a powerful thing when you're focused on the right objectives.

Kimberley

Wonderful. Well John, I understand that you have a gift for our listeners. Can you tell us about that?

John

Yes I do. On Godfit.com there's a link that you can download six free body weight workouts. And when you do that you can shoot me a message at John@GodFit.com and I'll give you the passcode. Just tell me in the email that you got it from Kimberley's podcast and I'll shoot you the password. And you can learn all exercises in those six free bodyweight workouts, and no equipment is needed. For those you just need a good attitude and a little bit of space in your living room and maybe your Smartphone or tablet to connect to Wifi to watch the video demonstrations of the exercises and the workouts.

Kimberley

That's fantastic, that's great. So I'll definitely put in the Show Notes a link to your website at GodFit.com and they can email you from there?

John

Yes, you can just click on the contact page and you can send me an email through my website. Or just send it to John@GodFit.com

Kimberley

Fantastic. You get six free bodyweight workouts. That's great. Thanks again to John Hayden for his expert advice and thank you for joining us today.

This interview has been brought to you by [*JumpStart – a free 2 week challenge to get you into the habit of spiritual & physical routines.*](#) You can discover more about this free challenge and other health programs at my website 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

