

Five Requirements for Physical Life: An Object Lesson for Spiritual Life

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There are five requirements for physical life, health, growth, and development, and God uses these five elements to teach us truths about spiritual life and health.

The five requirements for physical life are air, water, food, rest, and exercise. Let's examine how each of these elements have a corresponding spiritual application.

Element One: Air

In order to live physically, we must breathe. Inhaling oxygen is a requirement for life, as well as exhaling carbon dioxide. This is breathing, the active exchange of gases that physical life functions upon.

When God created Adam, He breathed into Adam the "breath of life" and Adam became a living being (Genesis 2:7). The breath of life represents the life-giving spark, energy, the vitalizing or animating power that comes from God. We do not possess life apart from God. We do not have life original to

ourselves; rather, our life comes from God.

Jesus told Nicodemus,

I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit (John 3:5-8 NIV84).

Jesus first comments upon the physical birth of the flesh, with its amniotic fluid (when a woman's water breaks), then describes the new birth brought about by the Holy Spirit. Notably, in the Greek, the word for spirit is *pneuma*, from which we get the words pneumonia and pneumatic; it is translated into English as either spirit, wind, breath, or ghost—as in the Holy Ghost or giving up the ghost.

When a person dies, they stop breathing and are described as having "expired," which means an end, a termination, *but* also to exhale—or in this case, to breathe one's last breath.

Let's look at two versions of Luke 23:46, which says this about Jesus' moment of death:

- KJV: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."
- NIV84: "Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last."

Just as we need air for our bodies to live, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit to live, grow, and thrive spiritually. The action of breathing is a well-known sign of life, and to live in God's kingdom we must inhale the Spirit of God and breathe out in our words and actions the truth and love of God in how we live and treat others, which is the sign of a new life in Christ. Jesus said:

All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35 NIV84).

The life-giving power of love comes from the Spirit of God, the animating power that recreates us in His image and through whom we partake of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

The **Spirit gives life**; the flesh counts for nothing (John 6:63 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We say this because we have confidence in God through Christ. There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of doing this work. The capacity we have comes from God; it is he who made us capable of serving the new covenant, which consists not of a written law but of the Spirit. The written law brings death, but **the Spirit gives life** (2 Corinthians 3:4-6 GNT, emphasis mine).

Air is the most critical element we need to physically live—deprivation of oxygen causes death more quickly than the loss of any of the other elements. Likewise, cut off from the Spirit of God, we do not have spiritual life. It is only through the life-giving connection with the Holy Spirit that we are reborn and experience a new life—an eternal life in Christ.

Element Two: Water

Our bodies are approximately 60 percent water, and water is essential for life, health, and functioning. Without water, physical life will cease.

Water refreshes, washes away dirt, cleans wounds, and is essential for physiological life. To the Israelites, the ancient nomadic people who lived in an arid land and through whom God provided the Scriptures, water was understood to be life—and water came to symbolize life.

Jesus told the woman at the well:

If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water ... [and] whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:10, 14 NIV84).

In the book of Revelation, Jesus tells His faithful:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life (21:6 NIV84).

And the apostle Paul wrote,

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5 NIV84).

The Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of both truth and love (John 14:17; Romans 5:5, 15:30). Our minds are cleansed of the lies of Satan through the truth brought by the Holy Spirit, and our hearts are cleansed from fear and selfishness by the love brought by the Holy Spirit.

And just as we are to drink physical water every day, so also we are to drink in the truth and love of God via the indwelling Spirit every day to maintain our health, vitality, and development.

And just as in this world we become dirty and clean our bodies with a bath, and quickly become dirty again and need to bathe again, so also after having our hearts and minds washed by the Holy Spirit, this evil world of sin assaults us with new falsehoods, mistreatment, accusations, exploitations, abuses, disappointments, loss and grief, temptations—all kinds of “dirt” that works its way into our thoughts

and feelings, and needs to be removed. It is through the life-giving connection with the Holy Spirit that we daily wash our hearts and minds in the truth and love of God in order to prevent the dirt of this world from darkening our hearts.

In order to have spiritual life and health, after partaking of the Holy Spirit and being reborn, we must drink in the truth and love of God to be cleansed from past guilt, shame, fear, heartaches, discouragement and to be invigorated with new motives and empowered for victorious living. We must daily drink the water of life!

Element Three: Food

In order to be physically healthy, we must not only breathe air and drink and bathe in water, but we also must ingest food to provide proper nutrition and energy.

The Bible uses the metaphor of food for our bodies to teach the truth about food for our souls. Jesus said:

I tell you the truth, unless you **eat the flesh** of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever **eats my flesh** and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my **flesh is real food** and my blood is real drink. Whoever **eats my flesh** and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who **feeds on me** will live because of me. This is the **bread** that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but **he who feeds on this bread will live forever**" (John 6:53-58 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 2, 14). When we eat physical food, meat or bread, the food is broken down into molecules that 1) give us energy and 2) also get reassembled to become the building blocks of the various tissues of our bodies. Likewise, as we ingest Jesus, the "Bread of life" who is the source of all truth, we are ingesting the truth of God as embodied, lived out, and revealed by and in Jesus.

These eternal truths, as they are taken into our hearts and minds, become building blocks of our ideas, beliefs, perspectives, schemas, values, and morals, and they form the way we see and understand reality. Just as our bodies are built out of the food we eat, so too our minds, hearts, and characters are transformed, rebuilt, and purified as we feed on the truth of God that is found in Jesus Christ.

And just as the quality of physical food has a direct impact on our physical health, so also the quality of our spiritual food directly impacts our spiritual health. Junk food might taste good and be filling, but it ultimately undermines health, causing physical disease and shortening life. Likewise, "junk" theology, ideas and so-called "truths" that people ingest because it might "taste good" and be "filling," ultimately causes all kinds of spiritual and relational sickness.

For there will come a time when people will no longer listen to reason, truth, or evidence. Instead, in harmony with their selfishness, they will amass professors, teachers and

theologians to delight them with what they want to hear. They will refuse to listen to reason and truth, and instead embrace fantasies (2 Timothy 4:3, 4 REM).

The Spirit plainly says that in the last days, some will reject the Remedy and promote a deadly false concoction originating in the minds of demons. These toxic constructs are peddled by deceptive charlatans whose characters have been forged in the Satanic mold. They oppose God's design for life — like marriage, and eating the foods God created to be eaten — which brings blessings to those who know and love God (1 Timothy 4:1-3 REM).

If we want to be spiritually healthy, we must not only be reborn by the Spirit, cleansed in heart and mind by the truth and love of God, but we must also reject the corrupting philosophies of this world and daily partake of heavenly food—the Word that was made flesh, the eternal truths that originate in and lead us back to God and from whom all life, health, and happiness are built.

Element Four: Rest/sleep

Just as our physical bodies need rest and sleep, so also we need spiritual rest.

After God created Adam and Eve, while they were still in a sinless, Edenic paradise, their first full day was spent in Sabbath rest with God. That rest was not a physiological rest; it was spiritual rest, the rest and peace of loving unity with God; the rest and peace of experiencing oneself being loved, cherished, and valued for who one is and not for some work or performance; the rest and peace of not having to prove oneself, of not having to earn one's way, of not having to work for approval, of not having to fight for affection; the rest and peace of intimacy and loving connection with God, with a corresponding love, admiration, and appreciation for God as their Designer, Creator, and Friend. This rest is the spiritual rest of being fully known by God and in turn knowing God (John 17:3).

God has prescribed for our spiritual health one day in seven to come apart from the cares of this world and rest in Him. Just as Adam and Eve rested before they went to work in the garden, so also we must first be reborn, be cleansed by the washing of the Spirit, ingest the Word of truth, and rest in loving relationship with Jesus *before* we are prepared and enabled to work in the Lord's cause.

Jesus said,

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV84).

Spiritual health starts by being reborn, then cleansed, then nurtured, and then resting our cause, our life, our health, our future, our everything into the hands of Jesus. We must rest in Him, rest in intimate connection, and in doing so, we are transformed by both experiencing His love for us *and* responding with loving admiration and appreciation for Him. We must stop the work of trying to save ourselves, the desperate and frantic effort to prove ourselves, to earn our way, to be "good enough." For "we are

God's special creation brought to existence by Christ Jesus to showcase his character—his living law of love—which was always God's design for us" (Ephesians 2:10 REM). Come to Jesus and rest in His loving arms!

Element Five: Exercise

All physical and mental development, growth, and advancement occur only through physical and mental exercise, through application, through purposeful action. This is the law of exertion. After Adam and Eve rested that first Sabbath in their relationship with the Lord, God gave them useful labor to engage and apply their abilities for their growth and development (Genesis 2:15).

If you want to become strong in any way, you must exercise that ability. If you want strong muscles, you must exercise; strong math ability, you must work problems; strong musical skills, you must practice your instrument. And if you want to be strong in the things of God, then you must choose to live out and apply in life the principles and methods of God.

If we don't use it, we lose it. Jesus taught this reality in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30). Those servants who invested and used their talents gained more. Likewise, when we apply ourselves and use the abilities God has given us, we gain more skill, insight, wisdom, and we grow in godliness. But if we bury our talents, then we lose what we had. If we don't actively choose to live out the principles of God, then while we may claim legal salvation, our spirits atrophy and we become spiritually weaker and less capable of fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

I encourage you to be spiritually healthy—to be reborn, washed and cleansed by the Spirit, nurtured by ingesting the truth of God into our hearts and minds, rest in the goodness and grace of God, and actively choose to apply God's principles to your life in all that you do."