

Welcome to “Muscular Christianity!”

The fact that you’ve picked this workbook up probably means that the title intrigued you and you’re wondering how a fitness program can be based on the example of Christ.

Simple. Jesus was in shape.

Jesus Was In Shape

He wasn’t given to any kind of excess; He would’ve adhered to an orthodox Hebrew diet and if you consider the physical rigors of His trade and His ministry, the Biblical snapshot we have of Christ is a Man that was fit.

We are commanded in Scripture to imitate God. Since Jesus was God in the flesh, the practical response to that command is to imitate Jesus in the way He related to His Heavenly Father and in the way He lived – which includes His approach to diet and exercise.

To imitate Jesus, then, is to recognize fitness as a matter of more than just wellness or aesthetics, it’s a matter of obedience. And when you look at it from that standpoint, fitness is no longer just an extracurricular activity. Rather, it’s a part of your walk with Him. And with that Reality comes a sense of urgency and inspiration that goes beyond simply wanting to look good.

But “Muscular Christianity” doesn’t stop with your physical waistline. “Losing the gut” applies to your spiritual midriff as well.

Your Spiritual Gut

Your spiritual “gut” is comprised of those things that represent the distractions and excuses that keep you from being consistent where your time with God is concerned. So in this study, as you’re documenting your daily diet and exercise routine, you’ll also be documenting the time you spend with your Savior.

At the end of “Muscular Christianity,” you will notice a difference not only in the way your trousers fit, but also in your overall perspective. Yes, the

exercises and the devotionals are put together well, but what makes the most difference is the way in which “Muscular Christianity” has you applying the Biblical concept of accountability.

Flying Solo

So many times we men fly solo. In the gym, we typically work out by ourselves, for ourselves and answer to no one other than ourselves. Spiritually, we give it our best shot, perhaps, but without something or someone to really keep us focused, we fluctuate and our time with God becomes sporadic and devoid of substance.

With “Muscular Christianity” you will find yourself operating in the context of a community. You’ll have an accountability partner that you’ll communicate with on a daily basis and on the weekends. In addition, you’ll be meeting with a larger group dissecting the material from the previous week as well as exercising as a team.

Here’s the Way That it Works

Week One

Introductory Session – This first session, you’ll be given an overview of what’s going to be happening over the course of the next several weeks. You’ll gloss over Chapter Six so you’ll have an idea of how to eat and exercise and you’ll also be assigned an accountability partner (a.k.a. “AP”).

You’ll swap email addresses with your accountability partner and commit to reporting your diet and exercise routine along with your “Quiet Time” results. You’ll find those sheets at the back of this book in Appendix A. Should your group opt for the twelve week version of the study, you can find the other six weeks worth of your “Daily Papers” online at muscularchristianityonline.com.

You’ll walk through your “Daily Papers” so you can get a feel for how to fill them out and you’ll also be instructed on how you’ll be quizzed on your memory verse each week.

Initial PFT – “PFT” stands for “Physical Fitness Test.” You’ll be running for three miles and you’ll be timed. You’ll be doing pull-ups, sit-ups, push-ups and jumping rope for 3 minutes.

Weeks Two – Five

Everyday you'll be exercising and spending time in God's Word. You'll be filling out your "Daily Papers" and communicating with your AP. On the weekends, you'll be getting together as a group, going through the previous week's content in the workbook and discussing it in greater detail. In addition, you'll be doing group calisthenics that are patterned after a military model. Each week, the exercises will be a little different, but it will always be a situation where you'll be glad you went and you'll be glad when it's over.

Week Six

Final PFT – After your morning Bible study period is concluded, you'll be doing your final PFT. It's the exact same group of exercises and tests as the original PFT – now you're seeing what kind of improvements you've made since then.

Graduation Ceremony – This will depend on your group dynamic, but ideally you want to do this in front of your church. Set aside a portion of the service and acknowledge the goals that have been met and be ready to hear some testimonies. There's a certificate available online that can be easily edited so you can hand out customized completion certificates.

Week Seven – Twelve

While this is designed to be a six week study, the fact of the matter is there's enough content available where you can split up each chapter into two sessions. Leader and Learner Guides are available online – both for the six week and the twelve week approach. Also, like what was mentioned earlier, you have six weeks worth of "Daily Papers" in this workbook, you can download weeks seven through twelve from muscularchristianityonline.com.

A More Muscular Presence of Christ

To truly imitate Christ inevitably involves the intentional blurring of the lines that separate what is perceived as secular and what is defined as spiritual. When you establish Him as the top button of your shirt, every other button falls into place exactly the way that it should: Your family, your work, your wife – everything. That is your goal. Being in shape is great, but by itself fitness cannot provide the necessary spiritual infrastructure needed to successfully navigate this life and the next.

That doesn't mean fitness is unimportant. Fitness is important because Jesus' example demonstrates it as such. But His example also shows the importance of complete obedience, and once we start down the path of imitating the Son of God, we inevitably experience a more muscular Presence of Christ in every area of our lives and not just an improved physique.

And that's what "Muscular Christianity" is all about!

Welcome aboard!



Bruce D. Gust

If you're leading a group of guys in a "Muscular Christianity" study, head out to muscularchristianityonline.com for a Leader Manual that will give you some tips on how to make your "Muscular Christianity" study all that it can be.