



SBAOC Weekly Update

NEWS & PRAYER REQUESTS

If you have any news, prayer requests, or events that you would like to have included in this update, please email the information to spurgeonassociation@gmail.com or call us at 785-456-8513.

PHYSICAL CARE FOR A PASTOR

Exercise by Brian Croft

(From *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd* By Brian Croft & Jim Savastio; pp. 119-124; Evangelical Press; www.epbooks.org)

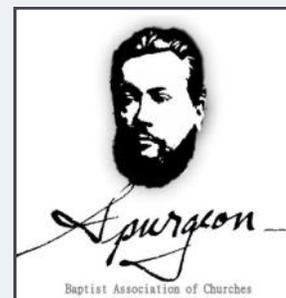
I have been an athlete most of my life. I played every major sport until I got to high school. I played tennis in high school. I also played my first year in college. I wasn't much of a student, but sports I could do. And I loved them. Once I realized I wasn't going to be a professional tennis player, I started to spend my time focused on other things. I went on staff at a busy church one year after quitting college tennis while trying to finish my education. I knew exercise was still important, so I tried to continue being active. However, I was not as active as I was in previous years. Two things started to creep into my life.

First, I started to gain weight. This was a new experience for me as I was always fit from all the sports I had played. As my clothes started to feel mysteriously tight, I did what most people usually do in this moment--deny what was really happening. My clothes must be shrinking in the wash. I gained ten to fifteen pounds that next year and despite my best efforts to ignore it, others noticed. My father, who is a physician, came to me out of love and voiced his concern to me. It was in this moment where I first realized I was not being honest with myself about my clear weight gain. I was eating the same, but not as active as I once was.

Second, I started to feel stress in my life in a way I had not previously. I became aware of levels of anxiety I had never felt. I explained it away, knowing I was growing up and taking on adultlike responsibilities I had never had before. That was in play, but something else had changed. I was not exercising like before. The connection with weight gain was obvious, but could my lack of exercise affect how I deal with stress in my life?

As I reflect on this season of transition into adulthood in my early twenties, I realize the common link in my weight gain and added stress was the sudden absence of exercise in my life. It had always been there. It was like that childhood friendly companion that is so familiar to your

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PURPOSE STATEMENT:

We unite as an association of Southern Baptist churches in order to manifest the glory of God above all. We purpose to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. We covenant to strengthen and support one another, motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

"If there is no church... should you not commence one?" C. H. Spurgeon

COMMENTS ON OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

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“The Old Testament prophets were screaming about the promised Messiah who would come and rescue his people, and the life of Christ for us on the pages of the gospel, the letters talking about the supremacy and the glory that belongs only to Jesus. Nothing is going to move our hearts forward except for the way that God talks about His Son.”

Anthony Mathenia

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life; you don't even realize how important he is until he is gone. That was exercise for me. It took years for me to realize what I now needed to do to care for myself in a new and fresh way if I was to survive ministry and adulthood. It is this same self-discovery that every pastor needs to realize if he is to care for his own soul well.

The problem is, when a pastor's schedule gets busy, it isn't food that gets cut out as a last priority. It isn't even sleep that gets squeezed out entirely. It's usually exercise. In all the priorities on a pastor's mind and heart, exercise seems to be the one we feel we can skip out on the most. This can only be explained in one way: We feel it is less necessary. And it is hard for many of us. This chapter seeks to give important reasons why exercise is still worth it and must be made a priority in a pastor's daily routine and how to accomplish this.

REASONS PASTORS SHOULD EXERCISE

The excuses we come up with to avoid exercise are endless. It hurts. I'm tired. I walked plenty today. I worked at my standing desk. I'll do it tomorrow. My body hurts. I pulled a hammy preaching Sunday. They are endless! And yet, when we neglect it, we miss a crucial way we care for ourselves not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. Before I give a few reasons why exercise is so important, let me establish what I mean by exercise.

I am defining exercise by a mix of cardiovascular and strength training that must last at least twenty to thirty minutes. In other words, it must get your heart rate up to a certain point for a certain amount of time and must push your body physically in a way it doesn't get pushed the rest of the day. How that is achieved will vary according to individual tastes and abilities. For some the answer is membership of a local gym, for others cycling or a brisk walk up and down hills for thirty minutes in the neighborhood will be a good solution. There are good reasons to exercise. They all are connected to the care of one's soul.

The first reason is that exercise is a key element in weight management. We don't have to be fitness trainers to realize weight gain is the result of eating too much and not exercising enough. Finding the reason we over-eat and the reason we don't exercise is soul work. There is an element of self-discipline that comes with exercise, but the soul work is to consider why pastors allow themselves to continue in the pattern of overeating and never exercising. You need to consider that for you.

The second reason is that exercise is one of the best natural ways to relieve stress in our life. This is what I needed to discover in my early twenties. My body had become accustomed to having that natural release that a hard cardiovascular workout provided. All of a sudden, stress went up and that natural stress reliever disappeared. No wonder I was anxious. As I became aware of this benefit with exercise, I started to watch for it. Now, I can identify when my body feels tense from stress, know the signs, and usually a good hard run will remedy the tension. Even if you hate to exercise, try to measure your stress level before and after a workout to see the benefit for you.

The last reason is that exercise is simply good for you. God has created us in his image and has made our bodies in such a way that exercise helps that body. Pastor David Murray makes this exact point:

Moderate physical exercise helps to expel unhelpful chemicals from our systems and stimulates the production of helpful chemicals. It strengthens not just the body but also the brain. Research has shown that walking just two miles a day reduces the risk of cognitive decline and dementia by 60 percent. And aside from the long-term benefits, exercise

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Deep South Regional Founders Conference—
January 24-26. Bethlehem Baptist Church in Laurel, MS. Theme: *The Doctrine of Sanctification*. Main Speaker: Conrad Mbewe. Go to founders.org/events/ for information.

True Church Conference—
February 14-17. Grace Life Church of the Shoals, Muscle Shoals, AL. Theme: *Honoring the Excellency of Jesus Christ*. truechurchconference.com

Southern Baptist Founders Conference Midwest—
February 26 & 27, 2019. First Baptist Church of Fenton in Fenton, MO. Theme: *Reformation in Today's Churches*. Speakers include Dr. Thomas Nettles & Dr. Owen Strachan. <https://sbfcmw.wordpress.com>

Saved By Faith Youth Camp—June 17-21, 2019. Webster Conference Center, Salina, Kansas. Speaker: Dr. Jim Orrick. For more info go to www.sbfyckansas.com or email trinitybaptistwamego@gmail.com.

Encouraged to Endure Conference—July 25-27, 2019. Second Baptist Church, West Frankfort, IL. Speakers: Joseph Mahlaola, Larry McCall, & John Snyder. Worship Leader: Tom Clay.

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triggers the growth of new brain cells in the hippocampus and the release of neurotrophic growth factors—a kind of mental fertilizer that helps the brain grow, maintain new connections, and stay healthy. Exercise and proper rest patterns generate about a 20 percent energy increase in an average day, while exercising three to five times a week is about as effective as antidepressants for mild to moderate depression.¹²

Exercise is a good gift from God and is to be a help to our body, mind, heart, and soul. Pastors must make it a priority if we are to care for our souls well.

CARING FOR OUR SOULS

You may have reached this point convinced that exercise hasn't been in its proper place in your life. You even see the effects of its absence and know you need to make a change. And yet, this can feel like a daunting task, especially for pastors who did not grow up as competitive athletes and cannot rely on that muscle memory to kick in at adulthood. Here are a few ways to help you get started.

First, do something small to start. Begin by going on a short walk in your neighborhood with your wife. The pattern of inactivity needs to be broken and it doesn't have to be through a goal to run a half-marathon next year. Just doing something begins to break the pattern. Set small achievable goals. Don't underestimate how something small in your regular daily routine will begin to bring the benefits God has designed us to gain from it.

Second, exercise with someone. This can be a great source of both motivation and accountability, especially for pastors trying to establish this in their life for the first time. It would be ideal for a pastor to find another pastor who would commit to meet three to four times a week at the gym or the park to exercise together. This will be a great reminder to both of you why this is important for the well-being of your souls. Don't miss the support and sounding board you can both be for each other in regard to ministry issues and struggles. I find it quite therapeutic and helpful to talk about ministry struggles while running, pounding out some pushups or hitting a heavy bag.

Finally; commit long term. There's a reason the gym and fitness centers of the world are packed the first week of January and return to normal six weeks later. Most people know exercise needs to be a part of their life, but fewer have the self-discipline and motivation to make it a part of their long-term lifestyle. It is crucial to a pastor's success that he implements a realistic exercise regimen into his busy life.

There's a ninety-five-year-old widow who walks a track near her home three days a week. Just five years ago she walked five miles each time. At ninety-five, she still walks four miles each time. She is amazing. When I asked her how she was able to keep this up, she said this:

I started a long time ago and I have just kept doing it. There are many days I don't feel like it, but I know as soon as I stop, my body will slow down. The key is doing something for your whole life and stick with it. It must be consistent, or it will never stick when you reach my age.

Pastors need to heed these words, not just for the sake of physical health, but so that we can be our strongest to serve Christ in our calling. We have been given one body and if we don't take care of it, it will hinder the noble work to which we have been called now, and certainly as we age. Regular exercise will be a help to our bodies and is essential to the well-being of our souls.

¹² David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-paced Life in a Burnout Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 78-79.

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PRAYER MEETINGS FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND REVIVAL

- Fellowship Baptist Church in Onaga, Kansas—5:00 pm on Sundays
- Trinity Baptist Church in Wamego, Kansas—8:00 pm on Saturdays

The Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches is an association of Southern Baptist Churches that are united to manifest the glory of God above all. We set out to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. As an association of churches we are bound in mutual covenant to strengthen and support one another - motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture - by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

We are a non-geographic association seeking to include any like-minded body of believers so that together we might better fulfill the great commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our intent is to lean on His instruction and not our imaginations so that He is honored in all that we do. We welcome churches who adhere to the confessions of faith accepted by Southern Baptists throughout their history, including, but not limited to, the Second London Confession (1689) and the Baptist Faith and Message.



Baptist Association of Churches