

## **Devo: A Summer Spurt**

**By Barry Shafer**

### **The Word:**

It might be helpful to picture your faith as a muscle: It will get stronger as you exercise it. The passages below contain actions that come with a guarantee for spiritual growth. As you read these verses, underline any actions you see—we'll call these exercises—then circle anything that results from the exercise.

“Whoever has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show Myself to them” (John 14:21).

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matt. 7:24-27).

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:1-2).

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins” (2 Pet. 1:5-9).

### **The Backdrop:**

At the risk of giving you yet one more unneeded distraction, take a minute to write down the first five things that immediately come to your mind when you see this phrase: *Summer Break*.

There is something about hearing the word *break* that makes you want to exhale a relaxing sigh. There’s something about the word *summer* that makes you want to daydream for a few minutes. Seeing those two words together as we approach the end of the school year, we might as well get the summer started.

It does seem that we’re wired for seasons, that our bodies and minds are ready for a change about every three months. Maybe this is why the school year is broken into semesters and why God divided the calendar year into winter, spring, summer and fall. Perhaps most importantly, and maybe the true reason for these seasons, these changes give us an opportunity to hit the reset button.

As we approach the upcoming summer season here’s an idea: Rather than thinking of summer 2011 as a summer break, why not think of it as a summer spurt—a growth spurt? You can think

of this as an opportunity to gain ground in many areas, such as losing weight, getting in better shape for the next athletic season, reading those classics you've always wanted to read, ramping up a hobby. Why not dedicate summer 2011 to having a growth spurt in your faith?

### **The So What:**

If you've ever been in a fitness program or in training for a sport, you know all about anticipating results. You can't wait to see the first hint of payoff for hard work. So, let's start with the results. Listed below are results noted in these passages. See how this list compares to what you found.

### **Results:**

John 14: Jesus and God will love you, and Jesus will show Himself to you!

Matthew 7: Storms of life will not shake you off your foundation.

Romans 12: You will be able to test and approve God's will.

2 Peter 1: You will be effective and productive in your knowledge of Jesus.

Take a minute to be your own personal trainer. Using the exercises (the actions) you found in the passages, write out a summer program that will bring growth-spurt results. Here are two examples:

### **John 14 and Matthew 7**

Exercises from the Scripture: To have Jesus' commands and keep them; to hear Jesus' words and put them into practice.

My Fitness Goal/Plan: Immerse myself in Jesus' commands and words; I will spend time each week reading the words of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, you could call this "reading the red."); I will seek to understand Jesus' words and commands and put them into practice.

Idea: Read a chunk of Jesus' words and then do what He says within 24 hours of reading those words.

Results Expected: To see Jesus in ways I've never seen Him before as He shows Himself to me as He said in John 14; to gain maturity in my faith that will sustain me through difficult or challenging life circumstances.

### **2 Peter 1:5-9**

Exercise from the Scripture: Make every effort to add these virtues to my faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection and love.

My Fitness Goal/Plan: Dedicate one week to each virtue; during that week, seek to understand that virtue and to live it out before moving on to the next virtue. Key phrase to remember: "Make every effort..."

Idea: Look at other Bible versions (this is easy at BibleGateway.com) to see how other versions translate these virtues; this can give a better understanding of the word and of how to add it to your faith.

Results Expected: I will be effective and productive in my knowledge of Jesus.

Right now, you have the entire summer in front of you. Make a commitment to gain some ground in your walk with God. Share your exercise plan with a close group of friends and ask them to keep you accountable to your plan. You may want to invite them to join you.