

book of the month | October 2025

A Little Theology of Exercise: Enjoying Christ in Body and Soul

David Mathis

"You are not your own for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." This is God's inspired Word spoken through Paul in 1 Corinthians 6. David Mathis' excellent and short book, *A Little Theology of Exercise* is written to help us know how to do just that—to glorify God in our bodies—in relation to exercise. It isn't a fitness or diet book at all. There is actually very little specific exercise or nutritional advice given. But it is a balanced, biblically grounded, and theologically rich exploration about how and why we should steward our bodies that God has given us.

In our sedentary age, we face a unique challenge. Unlike previous generations who moved their bodies naturally through daily labor and travel, we live in a world dominated by screens, labor-saving technologies, and unprecedented comfort. For many of us, if we don't deliberately pursue opportunities to exercise, we can remain unhealthily static, especially those whose work is primarily mental rather than physical.

What makes this book particularly valuable is Mathis's careful balance. He avoids two dangerous extremes that plague our culture: the sedentary lifestyle that neglects the body God gave us, and the fitness idolatry that makes physical appearance or performance ultimate. Instead, he presents exercise as what Paul calls it, something "of some value" (1 Timothy 4:8) that serves the far greater pursuit of godliness.

Mathis' thesis is that God designed our bodies to move, and that movement serves not just physical health but spiritual vitality. He writes, "Exercise makes happier humans, and God made humans to be happy—in him—with bodily movement being an assistant, rather than an adversary, to Christ-exalting joy." He writes

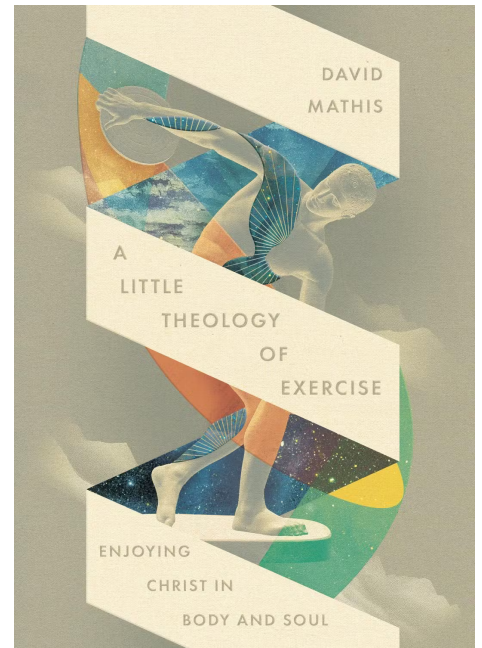
I hope it will help you, in the context of our sedentary age, to realize and leverage the potential of your body in the service of Christian joy. I want you to freshly appreciate the gift and wonder of our bodies, designed by God for movement and exertion, as aids in our call to glorify him and as assistants (rather than obstacles) to life-transforming joy in Christ and acts of love toward others. I also hope that Christians who are already active in physical fitness but often tempted by shallow and sinful motivations will find here the (little) theology to undergird, inform, and shape their bodily training. I pray that those who are already dedicated to exercise but driven by worldly and selfish reasons would find solid, reinforcing biblical reasons to modestly train their bodies in service to their calling as Christians to be happy in God and glorify him in their bodies.

The book lays out five reasons why Christians should embrace modest exercise

1. For God's glory: Stewarding the body He designed and owns
2. For the mind: Exercise literally builds and conditions the brain
3. For the will: Learning to "lean into the hill" of resistance
4. For joy: Pursuing satisfaction in Christ, not self
5. For love's sake: Getting fit for good works and serving others

Our bodies are gifts from God, designed not for idolatry or neglect, but for His glory. Whether you exercise daily or have never run or touched a weight in your life, you will benefit from David Mathis' pastoral, biblical approach to the topic. I hope most of GBC decides to pick up and read *A Little Theology of Exercise: Enjoying Christ in Body and Soul* and read it this October. We will all benefit, and God would be glorified if we put these things into practice.

Jacob Hantla



Suggested One-Month Reading Plan Avg 3-4 pages per day

Week 1: Monday Sept 29th - Sunday Oct 5th

Preface, 5 pages
Introduction, 14 pages
Part 1 Move the Body
Making Exercise Christian, 4 pages

Week 2: Monday Oct 6th - Sunday Oct 12th

1. His Word, 19 pages
2. Our Prayers, 5 pages

Week 3: Monday Oct 13th - Sunday Oct 19th

Part 2 Condition the Soul
Why We Exercise, 5 pages
3. For Our God, 5 pages
4. For the Mind, 9 pages

Week 4: Monday October 20th - Sunday October 27th

5. For the Will, 10 pages
6. For Joy, 6 pages
7. For Love's Sake, 10 pages
Conclusion, 4 pages