

“Truly impactful read! Is your body the temple of the Holy Spirit? Aren't you a member of a royal priesthood? Mechele West reveals sound guidelines on how to care for the temple of the Holy Spirit – your body – including exercise, food, and stretching, all from a biblical perspective.”

- Mark C. Connell, Associate Pastor, Compassion Ministries at Gateway Church, Southlake Texas

“I enjoyed working out with Mechele and her no-nonsense approach. Her main concern is that she has a job to do, and that job is to help you get to your weight goals. I very much enjoyed this book. It's an easy read and impactful, with good information.

As an athlete, I was not the guy who loved the workout. I worked hard, but couldn't wait for it to be over. I didn't pay attention to the science, I just put in the effort. Mechele's book gives you workouts and nutritional guidelines, which are very helpful for people like me who want to work out for good health, but may not know the proper body parts to get the best results. I pray that God blesses this book, for it is a blessing to me.”

- Michael Jordan, PGA of America Golf Professionals

“Because I am handicapped by childhood polio and use crutches and braces to help me walk, developing an exercise program for me has presented unique challenges. With great skill and dependence on the leading of the Holy Spirit, Mechele has faithfully worked with me to develop my body. So with much confidence I recommend her book and the knowledge of her subject matter.

Reading her book will help you to discover how God intended us to care for our physical bodies. She understands the spiritual connection of dependence on the Holy Spirit and the warfare we fight daily to be whole. If you follow her advice you will be on the right road to health and happiness.”

- Ann Foster, Pastor, Teacher, and Author of
In My Dreams I Can Dance

Fit Your Body
to
Honor God

by: Mechele West



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Dedication



To Victor, my loving husband, and personal superhero: Thank you for being the iron that God chose to use to sharpen me. Your unmovable tenacity to anchor yourself to the word of God regardless of what is going on, or who is saying what, has taught me how to be more mature and balanced in my walk with God. Your daily cross-bearing decisions and fear of the Lord ONLY, has caused favor and blessing to fall upon me (Psalm 128:2-3).

To my children, whom I truly adore: You two are my inspiration to be a more devoted Christian, an unconditionally loving mother, and a better person. To my eldest, Yvette: Your heart is bigger than life; your gifting is so prevalent that it will make room for you where ever you go. You are and always will be my *Firework*, I love you. To Asia: You are so precious; your smile can brighten any room. I love everything about you. Continue to be the warrior that God intended you to be, breaking down barriers and stereotypes (yes *Mirror*, a female can be smart, beautiful and strong).

In Loving Memory of Randy Smith
(1957-1992)

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Chapter 1 - Motivation



Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. - Romans 12:1

I will forever be grateful for the day that bananas saved my life.

The year was 2003 and I was new to the world of competitive bodybuilding. Quite frankly, I had no idea what I was doing. It was my first competition, the Red River Classic in Oklahoma City. I hadn't completely prepared for what to expect, perhaps assuming I knew more than I did. If not for my Posing Coach, Sheilahe Brown, I may not have even found the stage.

Navigating the process was much more difficult than I had thought it would be. Leading up to the competition, I took advice from anyone and everyone and, as I watched my pounds melt away and my body take on a fabulously defined shape, I didn't realize that along with my body fat I was losing life-sustaining nutrients. In the excitement of preparing for competition, however, that didn't matter to me.

The day before the competition, I was a pound heavier than the maximum weight for my class. I quickly layered my body with sweat tops and pants. I jogged the hotel stairs, rode an exercise bike, sat in a sauna, and ran around the hotel parking lot until I nearly passed out from exhaustion and

dehydration.

But my efforts were successful. At my weigh-in, the number was right and I was officially entered into the competition. That night I rested well - frankly, I really had no energy for anything but sleep - and in the morning I dressed then headed to the stage for the morning judging.

My stomach hurt. Not from nerves or butterflies, but because my nutrient levels were so low that my kidneys and liver were suffering. The thrill of the competition kept me upright and I performed well, but once I left the stage, I doubled over in pain. Someone who had been down this road before recognized that my potassium levels were dangerously low and some kind-hearted, banana-toting people began shoving them down my throat as fast as possible.

The bananas got me through the day and I made it to the evening show, where final judging was done and winners were announced. I knew as I stood there and heard my name called as the winner of my class, there was nowhere I'd rather be at that moment - even if the cramps remained.

Once I was offstage, the cramps stabbed through my entire body and I was force-fed more bananas. The doctor later told me that the bananas kept me from passing out completely and allowed my kidneys and liver to hang in there long enough that I could get medical help.

Despite being sick for weeks to follow, I knew I was at the beginning of a new chapter in my life. The lesson I learned through that first bodybuilding competition is one that applies to each of us, whether related to our faith, our relationships, our jobs, or whatever our daily decisions may be. You see, I so desperately wanted to do well, I listened to advice from anyone and everyone. I didn't filter the advice through a sound expert as to what I should or shouldn't be doing. As a result, I nearly killed myself, albeit inadvertently.

In life, we must do the same thing. We must filter our

decisions through an expert. I have tried many alternatives and the One through whom I now filter all my decisions is the Lord Jesus Christ. I have tested the waters, and Christianity is the only belief system that consistently works.

I love bodybuilding and, now that I know how to train properly, I love it even more. Winning that first bodybuilding competition and my early success were high points that followed years and years of training in various physical disciplines. Looking back, I can see how throughout my entire life God prepared me physically, mentally, and spiritually for my current ministry. People struggle to connect bodybuilding or a healthy lifestyle to the Bible and faith. I see them as a beautiful intertwining of showing the One who gave His life for me that I respect the life He has offered.

I often hear statements about my bodybuilding such as: “I don’t understand how you do it. There is just no way in the world I could be that disciplined.” There are others who ask me: “What does bodybuilding have to do with Christ? If I am a Christian, does God really care if I work out? What does my faith have to do with my eating habits? Doesn’t God say all food is good?”

These statements come from Christians who might see bodybuilding or working out as something that lies outside of God’s interests. If this is your belief, I challenge you to press on through this book because I believe God has given me a message that is relevant for all Christians, regardless of their current state of physical health. I do not advocate in these pages that all people have to do what I do (competitive bodybuilding and weight training), to the extreme that I do it. However, one doesn’t have to look around too hard to see that the majority of God’s people need to take better care of the bodies He has blessed them with.

My Motivation

Science has always fascinated me, even from a young age. I remember sitting in a high school science class one day looking at an anatomical chart. It was an outline of a human body (with no skin on it) showing all of the muscles. I'm sure you've seen the one I'm referring to. It is the one on which every muscle is defined, you can see the difference between striations and smooth muscles, and the body outline has a natural curved shape that fits to the muscles.

That picture intrigued me, and I stared at it for quite some time. With that image burned vividly in my mind, I began to notice the people around me and their body shapes. I quickly realized that they did not match up to the healthy-looking figure in the chart. Actually, there was a vast difference.

I had been in athletics for as long as I could remember. I began doing gymnastics, judo, and karate at the age of six, while living in Germany. My father was a Chief Master Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force and we were stationed in Bitburg. I was his only daughter and he didn't want me to ever be in a position where I was unable to defend myself, so he signed me up for classes. I had a natural athletic ability and took to the structure and discipline of these sports like a fish takes to water. My body type was well-suited for the required combination of strength and agility.

When my father was transferred from Germany to Arizona, my training took a more serious path. I began to train with a man named Grandmaster Khalid, who taught me a Korean martial art called Tang Soo Do. Translated, Tang Soo Do means "China Hand Way" and it is a type of martial art that incorporates fighting principles. The techniques have been around for centuries, but Tang Soo Do was popularized in the United States by Chuck Norris. It uses a colored belt system to identify skill level and rank achieved and I obtained my brown

belt. Shortly after that, my father retired and we moved to Texas.

I continued training. At age fourteen, I realized that breaking boards and other objects were going to be required in my sport. I remember feeling that I was too small to do such things. (I had a much smaller stature than average for my age.) However, my Sensei (Sensei is the term used in martial arts to refer to the instructor or teacher) was also a bodybuilder. He incorporated weightlifting into my regimen, teaching me proper lifting techniques that reinforced and strengthened me, making me a better fighter and a better athlete.

It was during this time of my life when the anatomical chart incident occurred. Because of my background and the keen awareness I already had about my body and its capabilities, I knew from that moment on I never wanted to stray from having a healthy, in-shape body. Also at this time, a guest speaker came to our school and shared a story that further inspired my interest in weightlifting. He had been in a horrible car accident and the doctors told him that if it wasn't for the strength of the muscles in his chest, he would not have survived. Not only that, but because of his increased muscle mass, his rehabilitation time was cut down significantly, getting him back on his feet months sooner than he would have been otherwise. If I hadn't been convinced before, I knew after hearing his story that physical health had a much more important purpose than many people attribute.

After high school, I joined the military. My schedule did not leave any time to participate in sporting activities, but I continued to lift weights to relieve stress. And if anyone needed stress relief, it was me. Whether you are female or not, you likely know of the cramps and difficulties that women can have during their menstrual cycle each month. Imagine that monthly inconvenience lasting not for a week out of the month, or even two weeks out of the month, but for an entire year! It

happened that way for me. I began bleeding and it lasted nearly twelve months. I had always been irregular with my cycle, but after such an incredibly long stretch, the doctor did some tests.

I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). PCOS is a hereditary disease that has many side effects which may include:

- Acne
- Weight gain and trouble losing weight
- Extra hair on the face and body (Often women get thicker and darker facial hair and more hair on the chest, belly, and back)
- Thinning hair on the scalp
- Irregular periods - Some women with PCOS have fewer than nine periods a year or no periods at all while others have very heavy bleeding
- Fertility problems or infertility
- Depression

Even though I didn't experience all of these symptoms, there was enough evidence to be concerning. The doctor put me on birth control pills to regulate my system. He told me that he was surprised that I was not extremely fat, as many women with PCOS are overweight. I learned that it would not have been unusual for me to also be extremely anemic from the increased blood loss; however my blood levels were fine. My doctor was perplexed at all of this, but I explained that I followed a diet tailored for weightlifting. I told him about the training I had done through the years. He determined that my regimen was the only reason that I was still alive and in very good health.

One night, shortly after my discharge from the military, I was leaning against my car waiting for a friend to get off from work. There was another person outside, an off-duty sheriff, and we struck up a conversation. Our talk turned to martial arts

and I learned that he was a Sensei who taught a form of karate called Shotokan.

I had told him of my previous training and he shared with me that he had trained the two most recent world champion females for Shotokan. This sparked my interest enough that I agreed to come by his school and check things out.

The following evening I went to observe one of his classes. He stopped his class when I entered the building. He introduced me to the students, who I noticed wore belts of varying colors from the beginner white belt through to one black-belted man.

The Sensei smiled at me and said, “Let’s see what you can do.”

He instructed the younger students to sit down and, beginning with the white-belted adult, had me spar each of the students, working my way up the belt colors.

This wasn’t my first rodeo, as they say, and I quickly realized what he was doing. I fought the first four opponents using hand fighting, so as to save my strength and energy for the higher level students. One by one I easily picked them off. When lastly I took down the pride of the dojo, the black-belted, undefeated competitor, Sensei raised his eyebrows in disbelief.

Not only did I survive fighting more than ten people in a row, but I out-scored all of them in match points. Life lessons flooded my soul following this incident. I realized that if I put my mind to something, nothing is too hard to accomplish. Even moreso, once you know that there is a value on your life, you will not forfeit the battle. In other words, when you know your life has value, you will never quit!

No matter what it is you are battling: other men, the devil’s attacks on your health, spiritual warfare, whatever it is, your mind is stronger than whatever is before you and whatever your mind or body cannot handle, God will finish.

Notice that I did not say “if you value your life.” We, as Christians, cannot put a value on the life that God has given us. All we need to know is that our life is valuable enough that God sent His Son to die for it.

My Walk with Christ

I learned the principles of the Christian faith from a young age through my Bible-believing, God-fearing parents. They raised me to learn the Commandments and we lived by them accordingly in our home. I must say, however, that although throughout my growing up years I knew *about* Jesus, I had not committed myself wholeheartedly to following Him. I had met some people who were Buddhist and I decided to explore Buddhist meditation in an attempt to “find myself.” However, I did not achieve any level of peace. In fact, it was just the opposite. At times I found myself increasingly self-centered and angry. Following some extreme instances of bad experiences while meditating, I decided to keep my focus on Christianity when it came to my faith. It was what I knew best. However, I still had not given Christ the same dedication I gave my training.

Following my father’s retirement and our move to Texas, some very bad and very personal things happened to me. These things threatened to annihilate my faith completely. In 1992 I walked away from the church and from God for nearly 14 years. Joining the military was actually an act of “running away” from the church and from things I didn’t want to face. I was wounded, broken, and made some poor life choices from a place of extreme pain. The devil tried his hardest to keep a grip on my soul. You see, when he couldn’t sway me through other religions and when he couldn’t take away my health through the PCOS, he tried to take away my life in other ways.

But know this: God always wins.