AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY
by TOM BENNARDO

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: In a world where so much in life is beyond our control, is the trend toward physical fitness an attempt to impose some limits over what we can control? We may not be able to slow down the pace of the world, but we can keep our waistlines from expanding. What are the spiritual dimensions that the attempts to stay physically vital highlight? In this sketch, two friends discuss the frustrations of attempting to keep their bodies in good shape and consider whether it is all worthwhile.

DIRECTOR’S TIP: Any exercise equipment can be substituted for the stationary bicycles, and they don’t have to be two of the same. Just keep audience sightlines in mind if considering apparatuses that are closer to floor level.

TIME: Over 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 3

TOPIC: Self Image/Self Esteem

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Matthew 6:25-30, Ecclesiastes 2:12

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Worship Service

CHARACTERS:
PHIL - A 30-something average guy with an average build. He’s a melancholic person who is growing weary of fighting the futile battle for physical fitness.
BOYD - Also a 30-something average guy with an average build. He’s the positive, salesman type who is always quick to give a pep talk. Phil and Boyd are friends who work out together regularly at a health club.
RAY - An acquaintance of Boyd’s who shows up briefly at the end. He can be any age.

PROPS: Two stationary bicycles, Three towels

SOUND: 3 wireless mics

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: An exercise club
Lights come up on two exercise bikes side by side at a health club. Phil is pedaling muddlely on one. Boyd enters and taps him on the back as he steps toward the other and prepares to work out also.

**Boyd:** Make it burn, Philly-boy, make it burn.

**Phil:** Yeah, right. *(pauses; Boyd punches in his workout on the control panel of his bike, commences pedaling)* You’re late.

**Boyd:** Yeah, sorry. Crazy day. I’m lucky to get here at all. How long you been at it?

**Phil:** I don’t know. Too long. *(pause)* D’ya see what that new building down the block’s gonna be?

**Boyd:** No. What?

**Phil:** Krispy Kreme donuts.

**Boyd:** Hey, don’t be going soft on me now, Philly. We both swore off that stuff.

**Phil:** Yeah, yeah, I know. *(long pause)* Have you seen those double chocolate-filled mousse things they’ve got now?

**Boyd:** Man, you’ve got to change the messages you’re playing in your head, buddy-boy. Think tofu.

**Phil:** Hmm ... Yeah *(he’s not)*. *(pause)* Why do we do this, Boyd?

**Boyd:** Phil, I said I was sorry I was late.

**Phil:** No, that’s not what I’m talking about. All this fighting with ourselves, denying ourselves, coming in here constantly to pound our bodies senseless.

**Boyd:** Come on, buddy. You do it because it’s important, that’s why. In the long run you’re gonna get far more out of it than you put into it.

**Phil:** What I get out of it is smelly shirts and tired muscles. Man, I’ve got more aches now than I ever had when I didn’t worry about this stuff.

**Boyd:** Are you kidding? It’s keeping you young, Phil. We’re lookin’ better all the time. *(he notices someone; nods toward where he’s looking)* Hey, there’s that “Theresa” again. *(they both suddenly sit more upright and pedal with purpose and ease, looking at the same place)* Hi there, Theresa! *(he waves, smiles and nods; simultaneously - after she’s presumably gone from sight - they both resume slouching and pedaling more laboriously)*