

**MAKING LIFE WORK:
YOUR HEALTH
1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17; 6:12-20
FEBRUARY 1, 2015**

How many of you made a New Year's Resolution for this year?

How many of you made a New Year's Resolution to lose weight or get in shape?

How many of you who made those resolutions are still keeping them?

You know that San Antonio has a reputation as one of the most overweight cities in America.

Good Mexican food, low average incomes,
hot weather that makes outdoor activities not so much fun.
It's a perfect storm.

This city, as a whole, is not in very good physical shape.

But it's not just San Antonio.

On our mission trip last year, the children in the slums of Kampala, Uganda were fascinated with James Voorhies and me,

because we have hair on our arms.

They were fascinated because we could and would lift several of them up in the air at one time.

And then they were extra fascinated because they discovered we had biceps.

There were almost no biceps to be seen there.

The typical diet of those living in the slums
was deficient in protein and a number of other nutrients,
so biceps and other features were noticeably underdeveloped.

Physical health is a San Antonio issue and a global issue.

It is also a Christian issue.

To begin with, there is a basic biblical principle of stewardship,

that we are given the task of tending and taking care of all that God has given us,
including our bodies.

Stewardship is not just about money.

It's about taking care of everything God has given us.

And the Bible has some things to say specifically about the care of our bodies.

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he brought this up a couple of times.

Corinth was a city given to pagan immorality.

There were plenty of pagan cults around where fertility deities were worshiped,
and sometimes that included religious activities with cultic prostitutes.

Some of the new Christians in Corinth believed at death their spirits would go to heaven,
and that was the end of the story,

so whatever they did with their bodies didn't really matter to God.

So, cultic prostitutes, here we come!

They somehow missed the fact that

Jesus spent a lot of time and energy healing the sick and the lame,
fixing broken bodies.

They forgot Jesus' resurrection was the resurrection of his BODY.

And that while our spirits will go to heaven after death,
the final goal is that our bodies will be resurrected
into the new creation.

God is concerned with the WHOLE person,
including the physical body.

Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth brings correction to those ideas.

In chapter 3 it says,

“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.

For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

(1Cor.3:16-17)

God's temple.

The temple in Jerusalem was where God promised to show up,

to hear the prayers of his people,

and to receive their sacrifices,

the place where God dwelt on the earth.

But Paul says to the church, now YOU are God's temple.

You, the church, are where God's Spirit is now present and active in the world.

You are now God's temple.

So what you do with your body matters to God.

Notice, nowhere is there any command to *expand* God's temple with various room additions.

The command is:

Do not destroy God's temple.

Don't mess it up.

Take care of it.

In chapter 6 he comes back to this idea that we are God's temple.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

His immediate reference was to say Christians should not be engaging our bodies in sexual immorality.

But if we're to honor God with our bodies,

wouldn't that also have implications for how we take care of our physical health as well?

Why do our bodies matter to God?

Because he created your body in the first place.

So by all rights it belongs to him.

And because, as a Christian you are not your own.

You were bought with a price.

In a scene of heavenly worship in the Book of Revelation, the song goes up to the risen Christ,

“You are worthy... With your blood you *purchased* men for God.”

(Re.5:9)

Jesus paid the price on the cross,

the price for paying off your sins and rescuing you, ALL of you, from death.

He paid an incredibly high price.

Now you belong to him.

Body, mind, soul, spirit, however you want to divide it up.

You belong to him.

ALL of you belongs to him.

Including your body.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome,

“Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship.”

(Ro.12:1)

Of course, he's talking about submitting your entire *lifestyle* to God,

*serv*ing him in *all* that you do.

But that, too, has to do with *the body*.

The care of your body matters to God

because he wants to employ you in his kingdom work in this world.

He wants you in reasonably good shape in order to maximize your impact in the world.

A sickly body, a body badly out of shape, has less capacity.

A healthy body has more energy, more capability.

Now, I know there are things that happen to physical health that you just can't do much about.

There are disabilities, injuries and illnesses.

Some people may have built-in propensities for weight gain.

There are the infirmities that come with the aging process.

But there is a *lot we can* do to maximize our physical health, caring for the bodies God gave us.

There are three things all of us can grab hold of that will aid our physical health:

Diet, exercise, and rest.

I know, that's nothing new.

But re we doing it?

First, let's talk about diet.

Personal confession:

Anyone who knows me well is aware that I have a sweet tooth.

Not for candy, but for cookies, pie, cake, and ice cream.

In fact, I was eating an oatmeal raisin cookie as I was writing this.

Oh, and I have to mention fried foods.

My grandmother was the consummate southern cook.

If there was a way to fry something,

she could fry it better than anyone.

And she taught my mom to do the same.

Fortunately for me, Jill does not like to fry.

But fried foods still call to me.

So I would be the *last* person to tell you *don't ever* eat that stuff.

There's nothing wrong with an occasional treat.

But I will tell you, I could easily blow up like a blimp if I let it go.

So I work to keep that in control.

I don't eat it any time I want to.

I watch my weight,

and get blood work done every year,

to make sure everything's running ok.

I also put in a little extra time at the gym when necessary.

The Bible is *hardly* anti-food or even anti-*good* food.

It's not all about *fasting* for 40 days in the wilderness.

In fact, the religious festivals of the Old Testament were always marked by *feasting*.

And it was at one of those meals that Jesus took bread and cup and said,

"This is my body, given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.

This is my blood of the new covenant,

poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

And it wasn't a pinch of bread dipped in a cup.

It was part of a multi-course meal, a feast.

In Jesus' time and in many of Jesus' parables the *most significant fellowship* was *table* fellowship, the shared meal.

The Bible is quite realistic about the necessity of eating

When Paul was a prisoner and was being taken by ship to Rome,

they ran into a great storm that threatened to sink the ship.

The storm went on for days,

and the crew was so worried they couldn't eat.

Eventually Paul received a word from God that they'd survive,
and he said to the crew,
"Now I urge you to take some food.
You need it to survive.

Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." (Ac.27:34)

You need a diet sufficient to stay healthy and strong.

So the Bible is not anti-eating.

However, the Bible has a lot to say about *gluttony*,

repeatedly warning against it, including it in lists of sins, (Pr.23:21; 28:7; Titus 1:12)
and even going so far as to say,

"And put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite." (Pr.23:2)

Some people eat to live,

and others of us live to eat.

Some people eat in order to have fuel sufficient for the day.

Others of us eat because we enjoy food.

And it's OK to enjoy food!

But there's a point at which *food* begins to consume *you*.

If you struggle with eating too much or too much of the wrong things,

and it becomes a health or weight issue,

maybe you ought to ask yourself some tough questions.

Like:

Why do I do this?

What drives me to eat when I'm not hungry?

Is there some emotional pain I'm covering over?

Is there something I'm missing in my life

and I'm trying to fill the gap with food?

Has food become my god?

Is it ruling my life?

It might even be worth your while to work that out with a counselor.

Those are important questions.

And until you find the right answers,

you might never get control of your eating.

So the first component for good health is a healthy diet.

The second piece I want to talk about is exercise.

In the ancient Middle East there was no Gold's Gym.

Most people got plenty of exercise simply because of their way of life.

They walked from place to place,

even what we would think of as long distances.

Most people worked at physically demanding jobs.

Fishermen pulling boat oars and pulling in nets full of fish.

Farmers plowing and planting and harvesting by hand.

Carpenters and stone worker with no power tools.

Drawing water from a well and carrying heavy jars back home.

Nobody was a desk jockey working at a keyboard.

It was mostly physical labor.

So exercise was not something they had to go looking for.

It was built into their lives.

But even so, when Paul wrote to Timothy he said,

"For physical training is of some value,

but godliness has value for all things,
 holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” (1Tim.4:8)

Spiritual training is the main thing.

But, Paul admits, physical training is of some value.

Being physically fit makes a difference in the Christian life.

It's part of your stewardship of your body.

And it's part of staying in good enough shape that you have energy and ability,
 and God can use you in his work in the world.

You don't have to run marathons.

You don't have to be a body builder.

But some regular cardio, some muscle toning, some stretching,
 and your life just works better.

A brisk 20-30 minute walk every day can make a difference.

And it's a good opportunity to have a conversation with a friend or loved one.

Diet and exercise are important.

So is getting sufficient rest.

This is another one that is neglected today.

There's plenty of research out there that says most of us are sleep deprived.

This was not an issue in the ancient world,

as there were no electric lights, no televisions, no computer or smart phone screens.

So when it got dark, life slowed down.

A little bit of time around a fire or with a lantern,
 and then it was time to go to sleep.

Today...

People are up late watching TV, watching movies,
 playing solitaire or checking Facebook on their phones.

And not getting to sleep at a reasonable time
 given what time they have to get up in the morning.

So our minds are not as sharp,
 over time even our *bodies* can get run down,
 and even our *spiritual and emotional* well-being can be affected.

I once heard pastor and author John Ortberg say,
 "Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap.

Because it's harder to be Christ-like
 when you're sleep deprived."
 That's going to be quoted this week.

Beyond getting enough sleep at night,
 the Bible commands us to observe a weekly Sabbath,
 a day when we rest from our work.
Real rest for the soul *and* for the *body*.

So what will you be doing this afternoon?

It's the Superbowl.

Millions of people will be watching TV,
 millions of people desperately in need of exercise
 watching a small group of men in desperate need of rest.

And we'll be eating a lot of stuff that's not good for us.

So DON'T TRY TO START A NEW HEALTH REGIMEN TODAY!

But tomorrow...

At least today we'll be resting from our work.

God cares about the **WHOLE** person.

Your *body matters* to God.

What you do with your body matters to God.

How you treat your body, how you *take care* of your body, matters to God.

So, how are you doing?

Today is our day of rest.

And today you are invited to this meal that Jesus gave us,

not so much to feed your body,

but to feed your spirit.

This, too, helps life work better.

(COMMUNION)