

STEWARDSHIP OF OUR BODIES

INTRO: Many people seem to have the idea that our souls or spirits are holy and sacred, but our bodies are not. They see themselves as spirits “trapped” in a body and longing to be freed from the body. That idea actually goes back to an ancient Christian heresy called Gnosticism, which held that Spirit is of divine origin and good; the body is inherently earthly and evil

Some people, of course, are very fitness oriented. But many are not. Many of us tend to lead very sedentary lifestyles. Further, what do we put inside of our bodies? It doesn't take too much looking to discover that many people are doing something drastically wrong with their bodies. Let me give you just a few statistics on just one body problem: the issue of over weight and obesity. Typically, “overweight” is defined as a BMI of 25+ and obesity is a BMI of 30+. BTW, on the handout in today's bulletin is a website you can go to that has a calculator to calculate your own BMI.

Recent data reveal that > two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. Additionally, > 25% of children aged 2-5 are overweight or obese and 1/3 of school-age children are overweight or obese. And the epidemic of childhood obesity is rapidly increasing. In 2008-09 the proportion of children 5 to 17 years of age who were obese was 5X higher than in 1973-74.

Excessive body weight is associated with various diseases, particularly cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, certain types of cancer, osteoarthritis, and asthma. Obesity has been cited as a contributing factor to approximately 100,000–400,000 deaths in the United States per year and has increased health care expenses an estimated \$117 billion in direct and indirect costs. This exceeds health-care costs associated with smoking or problem drinking.

Why am I talking about all of this body stuff? As we have been seeing for the last few weeks, we are all stewards over everything—and that includes our bodies. The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of our bodies. In fact, what we do with our bodies has spiritual implications.

O/S: What I want to do today is two things: (1) Look at some biblical data regarding the importance of our bodies; and (2) Make two specific applications: one short and one longer, that can radically transform our life and health.

I. BIBLICAL DATA ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BODY

A. We are created by God. God did not just create Adam and Even and then leave people on their own to reproduce. Instead, he is intimately involved in the creation of each individual human being [**READ Ps 139:13-15**]. Because he created us, the Bible says that God owns us. That includes our bodies.

We are not just souls “trapped” in bodies. Instead, we are body-soul unities. As Francis Schaeffer said: “[God] has made my body as well as my soul. He has made me as I am, with the hungers of my spirit and my body. And he has made all things, just as He has made me. He has made the stone, the star, the farthest reaches of the cosmos. He has done all this! To think of any of these things as intrinsically low is really an insult to the God who made it. Why should I say my body is lower than my soul when God made both my body and my soul?” (Schaeffer 1982, vol. 5: 35)

B. The fact that God himself took on a body in the person of Jesus Christ indicates the importance of the body. Perhaps God could have saved people by just decreeing salvation from heaven; but he did not do so. Instead, he came to earth as a human being, in a human body, and experienced all the bodily things we experience: hunger, thirst, tiredness, pain, and ultimately death. He values the body. In fact, in God's plan of salvation he could not bear our sins except by taking them onto himself bodily on the cross.

C. The fact of the resurrection also indicates the importance of the body in God's eternal plan. Christ emphasized that, after the resurrection, he was not merely a ghost, but had a real body. Likewise, we will have real bodies in the resurrection. When we die, the heaven we go to now is only a *temporary* heaven in which our souls and bodies are separated. But the Bible says there will be a new heaven and new earth. We will not live forever as disembodied spirits in heaven floating on the clouds, but will have new, glorified bodies, and will live on a new, glorified earth.

D. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 6:19-20 says [READ]. Think about it: when we become Christians the Holy Spirit comes to us—but not just to hover around us, but to actually come and live inside of our bodies!

This language of “temple” is picking up language from the OT, which had an actual physical temple in

Jerusalem. The OT temple was the most magnificent building in the world. **1 Chron 29:1-9** talks about how the Israelites spared no expense to make the temple the most wonderful building in the world. Why? Because God lived in it in a special way. If OT Israel understood the importance of taking care to make the earthly temple great because God dwelt there, we certainly should take excellent care of our bodies, because God dwells in us.

But our bodies—our temples—are infinitely more valuable than the temple in Jerusalem. Why is that? Because our bodies—our temples—are alive, not dead. We have been made in the IOG. While the IOG is not limited to the body, the physical, human body is the expression of God's image in a way that rocks, trees, and animals are not. For example, **Heb 1:3** describes Jesus Christ, in all his humanness including his body, as being **“the exact representation of God's nature.”** God values the body.

E. There is a very practical reason why we need to take care of our bodies. It is this: There is an intimate connection between our physical condition and our mental, emotional, and spiritual condition. Every person consists of a number of different aspects or facets. They include the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, behavioral, and spiritual. However, we cannot be divided up into these different aspects. IOW, we are not “10% body” and “20% mind,” “30% behavior,” etc. instead, all our aspects are blended together to create one whole person.

Because of this, our physical condition affects everything about us. If our bodies are ill or run down, we cannot function well spiritually, socially, cognitively, behaviorally, or emotionally. Our bodies are important, and we all know it, particularly when we get sick. When we're really sick, then all we do is focus on our bodies. **[Example: my 1st bout with malaria]**

If our body is weak, out of condition, tired, poisoned by bad food and drink, sick because we have not taken proper care of it, then our minds will not be sharp as we study the Word of God, and we cannot serve the Lord well, and we can't relate well to other people. So the physical condition of our bodies has spiritual implications.

Many biblical passages demonstrate the close relationship between our physical condition and our spiritual condition. Let me just draw our attention to one such passage. **Rom 12:1** says **[READ]**. Paul is using OT language of animal sacrifices. At minimum, according to this verse, we owe an obligation to present to God clean, pure, and healthy bodies, just as the OT sacrifices were to be clean, pure, and healthy.

All of the passages we have read or referred to are telling us in different ways that our bodies are important. But more than that, all of these passages are telling us, in one way or another, that:

PROP: What we do with our bodies has spiritual implications.

God created our bodies. God owns our bodies—he bought and paid for them. Our bodies are the temple of the HS, so God lives inside our bodies. So, ultimately, what we do with our bodies and what we do to our bodies reveals what we really think of God himself.

If we treat our bodies poorly, what we are saying—without realizing it or meaning to say it, but we are saying it anyways—is: “I don't like this gift of the body that God has given me,” which really amounts to saying, “I don't like you, God.” Or we are saying, “I think God should live in a pig-sty or a shack rather than in a good house or temple.” Or we are saying, “I'm *not* going to present my body as a good ‘living sacrifice,’ because I don't particularly respect God or his Word so I'm not going to do what he says.” You see, what we do with our bodies has spiritual implications.

II. HOW CAN WE PRACTICALLY APPLY THIS AND BE BETTER STEWARDS OF OUR BODIES?

There are many things we can do to be better stewards of our bodies, but I just want to focus on two things, both very important, and both of which are easy to do and can be transformative for ourselves and others.

A. How to cough and sneeze properly. **[Example of sick woman at forex in Nairobi]** We all know that we should not sneeze like that woman. How should one sneeze? **[DEMONSTRATE]** Into your sleeve/upper arm, *not* into your hands. More germs are spread by hand than virtually any other way. On the handout in the bulletin is the link to a short YouTube video that makes this very clear, which everyone should watch.

Think about it. Remember, there are spiritual implications for what we do with our bodies. For example, Jesus said the second greatest commandment is “love your neighbor as yourself.” What better way is there to love your neighbor than not infecting him with your germs? This is just a matter of habit. It is easily learned and doesn't cost anything. Once you change your habit, you'll never go back to sneezing into your hands. In fact, you will see people who do that and go, “Oh my God, keep away from me!”

B. What we eat. We began today by talking about the statistics concerning the epidemic of obesity in America. The issue of stewardship of our bodies is not only a matter of how fat we may be but of what we are putting into our bodies. What do I mean? I mean: What do we know about the food we eat? Do you ever take a look at the labels and see exactly what it is you are putting into your body? This is of profound importance, because what we eat and drink is the single most important factor for our health. Period.

I'm just like everyone else. **[My example. Weight gain over 30+ years; knew I should lose weight, but never did anything about it until at end of 2010. Had been a size 34 waist for years, but had to get bigger pants]** Went online; found Vic Magary's "31 Day Fat Loss Cure." Ordered it for \$39.97. Was the best \$39.97 I ever spent. We started learning about food and nutrition. We changed our diet and changed our lives. We've both lost 25-30#. We're eating much better. We're healthier; feel better, Nancy looks better. Now I wear a size 32. The handout includes a couple of Vic Magary websites. Most of what I paid for he now has for free.

What did I learn?

1. 80% of fat loss is DIET; the rest is exercise. Exercise doesn't have to be long, boring workouts. In fact, the most productive exercise is short—15-20 minutes or less—where you get your heart rate and metabolism up. And you don't need any special equipment. **[Describe Nancy's and my workouts]**

2. Although America is the richest nation in the world, what many of us eat much of the time could charitably be described as "poison." That's why we're so fat. And that's a big, if not the primary, reason why we have such high rates of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic tiredness, high blood pressure, and all sorts of other health problems. Let me give you just a few specifics:

- The three biggest causes of belly fat are: carbs, sugar, and dairy. *Carbs*—specifically, simple carbs with a high glycemic index (which refers to the effect on your blood sugar level). These carbs include: bread (esp. white bread), bagels, pasta, regular potatoes, pretzels, potato chips, French fries, breakfast cereals, etc., etc. *Sugar*—primarily refined sugar in such things as pop, most manufactured fruit juices, cookies, candy, cake, ice cream, milk chocolate (not dark chocolate, which has good properties for us). One doctor has called refined sugar "the fuel cancer needs to grow." *Dairy*—milk and cheese. If you *significantly* and *radically* decrease your ingestion of those things, you will be doing yourself a bigger favor than you can possibly imagine.
- You may say, "I couldn't possibly cut out cheese, or smothered baked potatoes, or bread; I like them too much." Yes you can. I did. And I'm just like you. I ate all the same kinds of stuff as most people. But I've changed my diet, and I don't miss the old at all. Drink almond milk instead of regular milk. Eat sweet potatoes instead of regular potatoes.
- The secret is having *good tasting* as well as nutritious things to eat instead of just eating some bland "diet food." This is where the websites on the handout can be of tremendous help to you. Most of them list great recipes of fantastic food that tastes great and is also good for us. And *you don't have to count calories!* Nancy and I are eating not only much better foods now than we ever did, but also a much greater variety of foods. And the other thing is *results*. I can guarantee you, if you start making the dietary changes I am talking about, you *will see positive results*—and you will see them sooner rather than later.
- As to the food labels, virtually all processed foods have list 6 or 8 or 10 ingredients, most of which you would need to be a chemist to figure out what it is that you're taking into your body. This is *not* what God designed us to eat. The short answer is avoid eating processed foods. You're simply putting poison into your body. If the label says "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" it's poison; don't buy it. On the handout is a link to show you what "hydrogenated oil" means. If the label says "high fructose corn syrup," that is pure poison; don't buy it. If you're trying to avoid the huge amounts of sugar in regular pop by drinking diet pop; don't. The chemicals they put in the diet pop are worse for you than the regular pop.
- So what should we eat? Most of the nutrition is in vegetables—carrots, onions, peppers, asparagus, kale, spinach, mushrooms, cabbage, you name it. Corn actually is not that good for us. It has a high glycemic index. Rice is a grain and beans are legumes, but they turn to sugar in the belly—especially refined white rice—so keep your portions down. But did you know that shredded cauliflower makes a great rice substitute. Fresh fruits are great—and you'll get plenty of natural sugar; that's OK. Meats, fowl, and fish are fine, IF they are organic. Nuts—especially raw nuts—are fine. And spices: spices have tremendous healthful properties as well as bringing out great tastes.

In the website regarding the "Daniel Plan" which is on the handout, there is a 15 minute video where Dr. Daniel Amen and his wife go through someone's pantry, pulling out and discussing the good foods and the bad foods. It's very interesting and I think you'd enjoy it.

- But this leads to something else: we should buy organic as much as we can. That includes meats and

chicken as well as fruits and vegetables. If you've ever watched a movie like "Food, Inc." it will amaze you with what is done to the cows and chickens we eat. The animals we eat are not fed what they naturally eat, and are injected with chemicals, hormones, antibiotics, and other things—all of which then go into us. We now buy organic for most things. Yes, it costs more. But it is worth it.

- All of this leads to the last two things I want to add. First, you may not be sick now; you may feel OK. That's because our bodies have a lot of reserves. But by consistently eating badly you're decreasing your reserves. What will it take to precipitate a change—because we'll only change if we want to and something sparks our motivation. For me, it was buying a new pair of pants. Maybe for you it is the desire to live a longer life and be healthier and active. Maybe it is the desire to look good. I don't know what your motive will be, but it really can't be your spouse nagging you—it has to come from inside.

Our youngest daughter knows a woman who drank a huge amount of diet pop every day. Then she got an aggressive form of breast cancer. As a result, she realized that she could not continue to poison her body if she wanted any hope of beating the cancer. So she now eats and drinks healthily, is doing therapy, and the tumor is shrinking such that, God-willing, they'll be able to surgically remove it. Nancy and I know a guy who had diabetes. But now he doesn't—because he changed his diet. Don't let it be cancer, or a heart attack, or diabetes, or something like that that finally prompts you to become a good steward of your body.

And then you need a *plan*. Without a plan you will not succeed. The websites in the handout should help you with this.

- Second, as a church we need to think about what we are doing and the example we are setting. Consider the snacks that we have on Sundays. Often they are very good and healthy, but occasionally they are simply cookies, donuts, crackers, and other sugarized and processed things like that.

It doesn't have to be that way. Rick Warren got together with Dr. Amen and other doctors and nutritionists, and they came up with the Daniel Plan. And Saddleback Church as a whole bought into it. Part of it was changing the snacks they offered on Sundays, but the people individually also made significant dietary changes. And in one year the people of Saddleback Church lost a total of 250,000 pounds, and Rick Warren himself lost 50 pounds.

CONCL: We can change. God has given us our bodies, and we are to be good stewards of our bodies just as we are to be good stewards of everything else in our lives. And the thing Nancy and I have found is that *it's so much better to eat right and live better*. The thought of going back to eating poison has no appeal whatsoever. What we do with our bodies has spiritual implications. Think what it will be like in a year when you've knocked off those 25 pounds, you look better, and you feel better, you have more energy, and you can say to the Lord, "Thank you for my body; this temple you've come to live in is now a little more worthy of *you*."

[HANDOUT]

WEBSITES REGARDING THE BODY

How to Cough and Sneeze Correctly

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtnEwvUWDo0>

Body Mass Index (BMI) Calculator

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/BMI/bmicalc.htm>

Diet/Nutrition/Weight-Loss (many include good recipes)

<http://www.danielplan.com/>

<http://www.vicmagary.com/>

<http://www.fatlossforfree.com/>

<http://www.31dayfatlosscure.com/fat-loss-tips/>

<http://paleogrubs.com/>

<http://ultimatepaleoguide.com/>

<http://www.foodrenegade.com/>

Misc. Food-Related Sites

- **The “Dirty Dozen” vs. the “Clean 15”**

<http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/>

- **Good Carbs vs. Bad Carbs**

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates-full-story/>

<http://goodcarbs.org/>

- **Hydrogenated Oil**

http://www.naturalnews.com/024694_oil_food_oils.html