

Practical Christian Living

Advance in Faith Unit 104

Week 2: The Believer's Body



Introduction

The purpose of this session is:

- *To help believers recognise the value and importance of their bodies and care for their bodies in a healthy and God-honouring way;*

The Believer and the Body

As believers we acknowledge God's claim of ownership over everything including our own bodies:

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

The secular world will tell you that “it's your body and you can say no” (if you want to!). The implication of course is that because it's your body you can also say “yes”, if you so choose, to whatever is being offered (casual sex, drugs, etc). However, the Bible says that it is *not* your body and that you had better say “no”!

The stewardship responsibilities of the believer concerning the physical body are:

1. To recognise / respect God's claim to ownership of our bodies
(1 Corinthians 6:20)
2. To endeavour to glorify (honour) God in and with our bodies
(1 Corinthians 6:20)
3. To bring the appetites and desires of the body under our control
(1 Corinthians 9:27)
4. To submit our bodies to God's will and service
(1 Corinthians 6:13) (Romans 12:1) (Romans 6:19)

In order to effectively do the above, it is essential that the believer be aware of the needs and necessities of the body and know how to meet those needs.

Firstly, the believer should follow the basic rules of good health.

Basic Rules of Good Health

1. *Eat Well:*

A balanced, healthy diet is essential not only for a healthy body but for a healthy mind and emotional state. We as human beings are psychosomatic, meaning that the body and soul are mutually interdependent and significantly influence each other. Disorders in the body can result from disorders in the mind and vice versa. A healthy diet prolongs life, enhances the quality of life and enables the believer to better fulfil the responsibilities of his / her calling. Paul advised Timothy to add a little wine to his diet for his stomach's sake (**1 Timothy 5:23**). Evidently he had an ongoing stomach illness or indigestion. This great apostle of faith and power gave advice concerning the young man's physical condition based on common sense and practical knowledge.

2. *Exercise:*

The human body was designed by God to require exercise in order to grow and develop and to maintain a certain level of health. A lack of exercise can lead to physical disorders (obesity, osteoporosis, weakened heart...) and mental disorders (depression, lethargy, decreased concentration...) and can keep the child of God from serving effectively and efficiently. Weight training, circuit training, aerobics, spinning, jogging, brisk walking, water aerobics and sport are all possible activities that one can engage in to maintain one's health and fitness.

3. *Rest and Relax:*

The body needs regular periods of rest and relaxation in order to recover its energies. Excessive work, be it physical or mental, will drain your energy and affect your health negatively. Rest was made for man's welfare (**Mark 2:27**).

4. *Practice cleanliness:*

The Old Testament book of Leviticus contains the dietary and social laws of Israel and it is interesting to note the emphasis God placed on cleanliness within those laws. Their homes, clothes, food and own persons had to be kept clean at all times. This cleanliness ensured their health, even in the middle of the desert. Personal cleanliness and hygiene are essential to living and feeling healthy.

5. *Avoid immoral behaviour and addictive habits:*

The value of morality is seen in its ability to preserve the individual and the community from harmful influences and situations. By avoiding intimate relationships and activities with immoral people and environments one is protected from their destructive powers. Avoidance of the so-called "social evils" (drinking, smoking, substance abuse, gambling...) also helps promote a healthy lifestyle. The Bible is full of appeals for holy living characterised by morality and integrity, not so that we can earn favour with God but so that we can enjoy quality of life.

Guidelines for dress

In addition to practising the basic rules of good health, we ought also to embrace the basic principles of appropriate dress. As a result of sin and the fall in Eden it is now necessary for us to cover the nakedness of our bodies. Initially man attempted to cover his body as he saw fit. This however did not please God and so God covered man as He saw fit (**Genesis 3:21**). Accordingly, God has given us biblical guidelines for dress and we should adhere to these. They are:

1. *Simplicity:*

Simplicity means that one should avoid ostentatious dress for the sake of personal indulgence or showing off (**1 Timothy 2:9**) (**1 Peter 3:3**).

2. *Modesty:*

This means that believers should not dress for the purpose of publicly exposing their bodies in a sensual manner. This would bring the Christian faith into disrepute and most likely cause others to stumble (**1 Corinthians 10:31-32**). Be sensitive to the people around you.

3. *Propriety:*

Consideration to one's cultural/social context must be given. What is appropriate in one culture/social setting is not necessarily acceptable in another (**1 Corinthians 11:13**).

Discussion Questions

Discuss how you think Christians should respond to and deal with:
Tattoos; Dieting; Video-Gaming; Coffee; Body piercings; Alcohol

Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit,
who is in you, whom you have received from God?
You are not your own; you were bought at a price.
Therefore, honour God with your body.