

“Does God get your Strength?”
Mark 12:28-34

Introduction: Pg.

There is a somewhat obscure reference to the physical health of Moses before he died at the age of 120 years old in Deuteronomy 34:7 that may be some of the most important words American Christians need to hear today.

“Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.” (“Unabated” means without reduction in intensity or strength.”) Moses died with eyes FULL of LIFE and a body FULL of strength.

Why do we need to hear this? While Moses died young at an old age, so many of us feel old at a young age. While Moses’ body was full of strength, many of our bodies are operating at a fraction of our potential.

Now, I am fully aware this is a sensitive topic.

1. We all have insecurities about our physical appearance and health.
 - We all have room to improve when it comes to caring for our bodies.
 - We all struggle. If you’re perfect in this area, you need to be helping the rest of us!
2. Our unhealthy lifestyles are killing us...
 - The World Health Organization reported in 2016 that Chronic Disease (a disease lasting 3 months or longer) is responsible for 88% of deaths in the United States.
 - And yet... “The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that eliminating three risk factors – poor diet, inactivity, and smoking – would prevent: 80% of heart disease and stroke, 80% of Type 2 Diabetes, and 40% of cancer!” (https://www.fightchronicdisease.org/sites/default/files/docs/GrowingCrisisofChronicDiseaseintheUSfactsheet_81009.pdf)
 - If that does not grab your attention, consider this: “*The U.S. armed forces depend on approximately 200,000 citizens to volunteer every year. Unfortunately, the Pentagon reports that 71 percent of Americans aged 17 to 24 cannot join the military. The main reason... “physical fitness.”*”
 - Major General Michael Frost, the Commanding General at the Center for Initial Military Training, the person in charge of military training said: “... *the next existential threat that we have, maybe a generation down the line is ... the inability to provide qualified people, volunteers to serve in our military.*” (<https://keepfitnesslegal.crossfit.com/2017/10/16/us-army-general-calls-lack-of-able-bodied-recruits-next-existential-threat/>)
 - As one health coach said: “We live in the age of comfort gone deadly.” (Shane Trotter)

This is why we need to hear the call...

The Point: Give God all your strength because God gave you all of his!

Two simple truths to build around. #1) We want to give God our physical health and strength in a way #2) that is motivated by what he’s done for us.

1. Love God by giving him all your physical strength.

What does it mean to love God with our Strength?

- It can be translated power or might.
- It refers to being physically vigorous.
 - When people accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, he corrected that view real quick!... “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil” (Luke 11:21-22)
- It implies personal potential, the strength to get the job done.
 - 1 Peter 4:11 shows us this when speaking of spiritual gifts: “whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”
- It’s the same word we see in Ephesians 1:19: speaking of the great might God displayed when raising Jesus from the dead. It’s God’s ability to accomplish his purposes.

It's about taking care of our body to live at our maximum potential. For as long as possible!!

Just look at the lives of CEOs. They know when you are at peak mental, emotional, and physical performance, you perform at your best!

But someone will object: God knows how long I will live. They are written in his book... by which they mean: I can eat whatever, drink whatever, smoke whatever, and live however I want, because God already knows the day of my death. Hey, listen: that's theologically true.

You know what is also theologically true? God's sovereignty does not excuse our stupidity!

Simple Theology of the Body (Four reasons to value your body from a theological perspective)

1. In the beginning... God made Adam and Eve with a body.
 - Our bodies are a gift from God. We live with a body and soul. We are embodied souls.
 - Christians can be guilty of having the mind of Plato more than the mind of Christ, which said the spiritual world is good, but the physical is bad.
 - Have you ever thought? What God really cares about is the soul. It doesn't really matter if I practice good eating, exercise and sleep habits as long as I read my Bible each day!
2. Jesus came in a body! This is what we're about to celebrate at Christmas. The Incarnation: the Eternal Son of God became a human being, took on flesh.
 - Verses Highlighting the importance of our bodies... (The corpus of truth)
 - "as it is my eager expectation and hope that . . . Christ will be honored (exalted) in my body, whether by life or by death." (Phil 1:20)
 - [[“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess 5:23)]]
 - The body is... meant... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6:13)
3. Our bodies will be raised to live forever, just like Jesus.
4. Everything we do in this life happens within the bodies God has given us. This seems so obvious. It must be a work of Satan to help us minimize the value God places on our bodies.

T: So let's focus in on three areas of caring for our physical health: eating, movement and sleep

Issue #1) Eating Habits

Food is fuel for our physical health. What we put into our bodies matters. Think about this at two levels: what? and how much?

What we eat.

- How frequently do you read the ingredients & nutritional labels of the food you consume?
- This came home to me when my wife and I were challenged to do the Whole 30 diet (no sugar, grains, dairy, soy, & legumes). No processed foods! All natural.
 - It helped me see how much processed food I was eating.
 - It helped me see that what we put into our bodies actually can make you feel better, have more energy.
 - It helped me understand the value of evaluating nutritional labels.
- Did you know that the average American consumes 17 teaspoons of sugar every day (double the recommended amount for men and triple the amount for women)?
- Jesus said he is the living water, not the living Coke (or sweet tea for the Southerners in the house)!!

How much we eat.

- Did you know Proverbs 23:2 advises us to “put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony.”
- We need to discipline ourselves to eat wise and healthy portions.
- If we simply counted our calories and practiced some God-given discipline, we could reduce obesity rates by massive proportions.
- This came home to me again on my Sabbatical: “I ain't going out like that.” (6 weeks - counted calories)

A few things:

- 1) Your worth is in Christ, not the number on the scale.
- 2) “Sin can lead us to become overweight, but being overweight is not, in and of itself, a sin.” (Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters*) Sometimes overweight people are the healthiest eaters, and the thinnest people are the most unhealthy eaters.
- 3) Consider the value of fasting - not for weight loss but for discipline gain.

Issue #2) Exercise Habits (Movement)

What did Paul say in 1 Timothy 4:7: “for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

- It is appropriate to elevate spiritual training over physical training, but not to the neglect of our bodies. Don’t fall for the false dichotomy.
- 1 Corinthians 9:27: “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Encouragements

- It’s amazing what simply working out a few times a week will do for our health.
- Not only will we not be hyperventilating after taking the stairs (anyone?), but we’ll actually feel better. Movement brings emotional and mental benefits too. Your spirit will be lifted. Your energy will increase. Your workday will be more efficient.
- Don’t just exercise. Limit the time you’re inactive. Take a walk. Don’t sit at your desk all day.
- And listen don’t say: “I don’t have the time, I don’t have the space, I need a gym membership.”

Learn the Nelson Mandela Way... the great leader and liberator of South Africa who was imprisoned for 27 years, though his cell was not much bigger than a queen-sized bed managed to run in place and did sit-ups and pushups every day. No wonder he was in great shape to become President of South Africa at age 75 and live until age 95.

Issue #3) Sleep

- Top Performers get 8.5 hours of sleep each night. 6.8 hours is the average American.
- Here’s the irony: we stay up to be more productive, but losing sleep is actually counterproductively.
- How many of you brag about how little sleep you need, as if it’s a badge of honor?
- Sleep keeps us sharp. It refreshes our physical, mental and emotional state.
- How many times have you made poor decisions, said things you wish you wouldn’t have said, or underperformed under pressure, in large part due to a lack of sleep?
- Turn off the TV. Spend 30 minutes less on social media. Set a target time to go to bed, so that you will get enough sleep.

T: God has made us as embodied souls. It’s time for us to Love God by giving him all of our physical strength!

2. Let the goodness of the gospel motivate you to physical health.

If Satan can’t keep you from seeking to give God all your strength, he’ll try to get you to do so for the wrong reasons.

Wrong Motivations: The world tells us to eat right and workout...

- As a tool for our vanity... anyone ever tried a “BeachBody Workout”?
- Impress people. Look how good I look. Look how young I look, as if people really thought you’re not getting older.
- Or look how disciplined I am as I eat my 300 calorie salad for lunch and then go burn it off with a quick workout.
- We workout to cover our insecurities. To feel better about ourselves.
- These wrong motivations are fueled by one word: SELF. We will continually fight our narcissistic tendencies. That’s why Jesus said: “deny self.”

Gospel Motivations

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

- Your body carries the presence of God. You are a reflection of him to the world. You have been empowered to live life according to God’s design!

- Christ died for your body, what you do with it is tied to his death on the cross!
 - Not only should we honor God with our bodies in light of his body that was broken for us, but
 - We should also remember that we pursue physical health - not for an identity but from our identity. You are a son and daughter of God. You could never be more loved than you are right now. There is no condemnation in Christ! The Father is pleased with you. Jesus loves you so much he died for you! That's what moves us to watch our diet and get moving...
 - LOVE... with your strength... starts with the love that we have received from Jesus!
- To his glory. "So glorify God in your body." Do you see those words?!
 - This is about life to the FULL!
 - "Christians who don't take their health seriously don't take their mission seriously." (Thomas)
 - I've only got one life! I want to maximize it for kingdom effectiveness!!

Five Encouragements

1. **Pray: Confess & Request**

2. **Start somewhere, but START!**

- I'm not saying everyone has to apply for CrossFit... or go down to Ninja's Martial Arts Center, but start somewhere. Walk for 30 minutes a day...
- I don't have time. I don't believe you. Nelson Mandela.
- Find something you enjoy!
- Start on healthy diet for the next two weeks. Then add exercise/movement.
- It's time to decide and eliminate excuses and start building healthy rhythms to glorify God with our bodies!

3. **Pursue holistic physical health (eat, move, sleep).**

- What is one habit you can introduce to change the way you eat?
- What is one habit you can introduce to change the way you exercise?
- To change the way you sleep?

4. **Set gospel-motivated goals.**

- SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic - Realistically ambitious. Time bound (Have a deadline).
- But set it with a view toward the gospel...
 - Because my body is a gift from God, I will eliminate excess sugar down under the recommended amount of 9 tsp a day. OR
 - Because I want to maximize kingdom effectiveness, I will break a sweat with three workouts every week.

5. **Live in COMMUNITY!**

- Motivation (encouragement)
- Continuation (accountability).
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Conclusion:

Does God get your strength? What needs to change?

Consider how your life will be different. Consider how the lives of your loved ones will be impacted. Consider how you will glorify God in all new ways!

Prayer...