

## BODY AND SOUL

GOD IN MY EVERYTHING. KEN SHIGEMATSU. 2013 NOVEMBER 10.

ROMANS 12:1-2



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You may be seated.

Thank you so much, Yuhei, for leading us in worship.

During our first worship Sunday in December, we will have a benevolent offering, and that offering will be dedicated in its entirety to bringing relief to people in the Philippines who have suffered from this tragic typhoon. Ryan was saying that part of our vision is to go outward. We give away about 20% of the monies we receive here at Tenth to ministries outside of us, and we call on followers of Christ here to tithe – to give away the first tenth of their income to God. But we wouldn't do that if we, as a church, weren't committed to doing exactly the same. If you're not yet in a relationship with Christ, feel no obligation ever to give; but for those of us who know Christ, we follow the one who gave it all and we want to be a small reflection of that, so be praying about that as December rolls around.

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I'm just going to shift scenes here for a moment and go back down memory lane.

When I was a teenager, I remember my younger sister, who was 14 or 15 years old at the time, approaching me and saying, "I really, really am motivated to lose some weight right now." Can you guess why? She had an interest in a guy named Rod and wanted to attract his attention.

I remembered how there were some guys, some teammates of mine on the football team, who had desperately wanted to lose weight in order to remain eligible to play in our league. This is what they did: They took some Glad garbage bags, made tracksuits out of them, ran around like crazy doing some very vigorous aerobic exercise, sweat like mad – and they ended up losing a lot of weight!

So I told my younger sister to create a tracksuit out of Glad garbage bags, which she did, and I said I would train her without charge. We met at the cul-de-sac in front of our home in North Surrey, and I said to my sister, who was very motivated, "You've got to run 10 yards, reach down and touch the ground, run back to where I am, reach down and touch the ground; then go 20 yards, reach down and touch the ground, come back" and so forth to 30 yards and so on. As I said, she was very motivated! Aren't you glad that I'm not your personal trainer? By the way, I'm just describing this; I'm not recommending this!

Sometimes we are motivated to manage our bodies for vain and self-centered reasons. But at other times, we are motivated to steward our bodies for the honour of God. This is exactly what the apostle Paul invites us to do in Romans 12:1-2. Paul says:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

(Romans 12:1-2<sup>†</sup>)

Let's take a moment to pray.

Living God,

Those of us here who have really experienced your mercy and grace want to respond by saying, "Thank you." We want to offer our bodies – our whole selves – to you, and so we pray that you would show us how to do that, by your Spirit, in response to what you've done for us in Jesus Christ.

It's in his name we pray.

Amen.

Here in Romans 12, when the apostle Paul urges us to offer our bodies to God as "a living sacrifice," Paul is saying, "Offer your whole selves to God, including your bodies."

A few weeks ago, in the message on sex, we looked at 1 Corinthians 6, and Paul, in that passage, says, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples 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 honor God with your bodies" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

In these two texts, Paul is saying that in light of the fact that God has been incredibly merciful to us— God, who is invisible, and his Spirit, 2,000 years ago that first Christmas, became a human being, taking on flesh and blood. Then, when God was 33 years old, in the person of Jesus Christ, he voluntarily died on a Roman cross as a sacrifice, absorbing in his body our sins and our shame so that we could have a new slate with God. Paul says that in light of that gift; in light of the fact that, if you have given your life to God, you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ; in light of the fact that, if you have given your life to Jesus, your bodies are actually temples because God's Spirit really lives inside you – in light of all these things, Paul is saying, "Out of gratitude, give your whole selves, including your bodies, to God."

Paul is writing these words, inviting us to give our bodies to God, at a time when the people of his world would have been heavily influenced by Greek thought. Most people in his day and in his place believed, based on Greek thinking, that while our spirit is good, our bodies are evil. Well, God and the Scriptures don't hold this view at all. The Scriptures do acknowledge that both our body and our spirit have been tainted by the sin virus, but the Scriptures are firm that our bodies were *created* good. The fact that God inhabited a body that first Christmas is the ultimate affirmation that our bodies are good. The fact that we will die in our bodies that God will then raise up on that final day, in that resurrected state, is another affirmation that our bodies are fundamentally good. And the Scriptures teach that our bodies are connected with our Spirit, and so what goes on in our bodies affects our Spirit.

We know this is true from experience. When you and I are exhausted, feeling run down and spent, isn't it true that we are susceptible to different kinds of temptations – temptations we wouldn't have otherwise been susceptible to if we had felt rested? Conversely, when we feel physically good and adequately nourished and are getting enough time for recovery and Sabbath, we are more attentive, in our spirit, to God, whether it's in prayer or meditation.

So our bodies affect our spirits and our spirits also affect our bodies.

Isn't it true that if you receive bad news that you're going to get a terrible grade in a course that you took or that you're about to be fired from your job or that a loved one has just been diagnosed with a life threatening disease—

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<sup>†</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV®.

Isn't it true that as your spirit feels down, you also feel like the energy in your body is being drained away? Conversely, if you receive the good news that you just got admitted into your dream school or that you're going to get an unexpected bonus at work because of your outstanding contribution there or that your favorite aunt is now being declared cancer-free— Isn't it true that when your spirits are lifted, you actually feel more *physical* energy?

Our spirit and our body, our body and our spirit, are connected. This is why it makes sense that God, in the Scriptures, cares not only for our spiritual needs but for our physical needs as well.

God's prophet Elijah, in 1 Kings, is burning out – he's crashed in the wilderness – and God ministers not only to Elijah's spiritual need but also to his physical need by giving him two long sleeps and two wonderful meals that include freshly baked bread.

In Jesus' ministry, we see that Jesus doesn't just minister to people's spiritual needs, but he *feeds* the hungry multitudes, he *heals* people's bodies. He cares not only for people's souls but for their bodies as well.

In the ministry of the apostle Paul, as he mentors his younger protégé Timothy, we see that Paul gives him not only spiritual counsel but counsel for his body as well. He says to Timothy, "Drink a little bit of wine – for medicinal purposes – so that you can have a stronger immune system, which will help you overcome your frequent illnesses." In the context of acknowledging the limits of physical exercise, Paul nonetheless also tells Timothy that there are benefits to physical exercise while encouraging him towards godliness.

In today's message, as we continue in this series, *God in My Everything*, we're going to look once again at our trellis – the trellis that supports our friendship with Jesus Christ. A trellis is simply a set of spiritual practices that helps us grow closer to God, and we're going to look at how the practice of caring for our body is an act of worship.

Last week, Jade led us through a message on how our family life can support our friendship with God. For those of you who have families, if you weren't here, please go on to our website to watch the video or listen to the audio. It was a great message.

But today we're going to look at how caring for our bodies and, specifically, how sleep, eating and exercise can be ways that we connect with God and glorify him.

First of all, let's look at sleep.

According to James Bryan Smith, a respected professor of spiritual formation, the number one enemy of Christian spiritual formation today is exhaustion. Smith says many of us are living beyond our means not only financially but also physically: Many of us are sleep deprived. Dr. Siang-Yang Tan, a professor at the Fuller Theological Seminary in California who spoke here some years ago, has said we need rest more than ever before in history. Dr. Tan points out that in the 1850s, the average person in North America slept 9.5 hours. It was, I think, before the light bulb and electricity; people were, I think, less busy! A hundred years later, by 1950, according to Dr. Tan, that number dropped to 8 hours a night. Today the average North American sleeps less than 7 hours a night. According to one poll done by the National Sleep Foundation, 49% of adults – about half of all adults – reported that they had trouble sleeping, and one in six reported having chronic insomnia. During the research for the chapter on the body for the book *God in My Everything*, I looked into some studies coming out of Stanford University's Sleep Research Center, and as a result of looking at that data, I became convinced that the number one factor in fostering our health and longevity, humanly speaking, is sleep – it comes ahead of even eating and exercises, important as those are. Looking at that data actually convinced me to change my own sleeping patterns!

I'm originally from Japan, and I worked in the corporate world in Japan for a couple of years. Inspired by some of

my colleagues there, for years I tried to get by on very little sleep. I'd often go to bed around midnight and get up around 4:00 a.m. There were days when I felt okay, but there were frankly days when I just felt really bad and really sleepy.

When we had a smaller staff, my office was behind these walls, and I remember one day, after the lunch hour, I was meeting with someone. I was feeling especially sleep deprived at that time. I had these soft, orange couches in my office. I was meeting with someone, and they were pouring out the deep problems of their heart (you see where this is going!), and I start to nod – not in agreement but off to sleep. The person blurted out, “Are you falling asleep?!” I was like, “No, I’m praying for you.” Double sin: falling asleep and lying about prayer!

I now aim, as part of my rhythm of life, to get at least seven hours of sleep a night. It doesn’t always work out that way – a rhythm of life must be flexible – but I aim for between seven and eight hours a night. I still rise early, but if I’m not working and if I don’t have an engagement in the evening, I’ll go to sleep early. Sometimes my wife will ask me, “What time did Joey fall asleep last night?” I’m like, “I have no idea. I fell asleep before he did.” But I’m telling you: I feel better not just physically but also spiritually now that I am more rested.

You’ve been sleeping your whole life. Well, not your entire life because you’re awake right now, but you know what I mean: You’ve been in the habit of sleeping since you were an infant. But sleep is a skill that we need to learn and re-learn. People who sleep well are often mindful about what they do and what they don’t do just before they go to sleep. They often will not check email or surf the internet or watch TV or do things that would stimulate them. They often have rituals before they go to sleep that will calm them and centre them. Before falling asleep, I like to pray the prayer of *Examen*. It’s an Ignatian prayer, which Ryan referred to earlier, where I ask myself, “Where did I feel most gratitude today? What did I feel most anger and frustration over? What were my joys? What were my sorrows?” And I lift them all up to God in prayer. If I wake up in the middle of the night, as I did last night, I’ll often recite a song to centre me, calm me and help me to focus on God and fall back asleep.

If you are a follower of Christ, you ought to be a better sleeper than you would be otherwise. You know why? Because you know the truth of Psalm 127 and of Psalm 121: that God provides for us while we’re sleeping. You know that God never sleeps – and, therefore, you can.

The apostle Paul says, “[Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God](#)” (1 Corinthians 10:31 NASB). So *sleep* to the glory of God. [*Somebody in the congregation responds, “Amen!”*] Amen. We have a witness in the house! If you’re really sleepy right now, you may sleep.

Eat to the glory of God. Do we have an “Amen!” in the house? Eat to the glory of God. Most of us don’t consciously eat to the glory of God or even eat mindfully. People who lead fast-food restaurants know this, and so they hire psychologists and marketers to capitalize on our lack of mindfulness around eating. For example, if you go into a McDonald’s, you will observe, if you’re noticing these kinds of things, that every single McDonald’s is exactly the same in terms of colour, décor, what the person behind the counter says to you – that’s all standardized, by design, so that when you walk into a McDonald’s, you and your kids are being cued so that eating habits will be triggered, so that habits will be formed. There are certain fast-food chains that have specifically designed their French fries so that the moment it hits your tongue, it starts to disintegrate, delivering, as fast as possible, a hit of salt and grease and lighting up the pleasure centres in your brain so that you get hooked.

Going back to the National Geographic study on centenarians that I’ve been citing in some of my sermons recently, people in the areas of the world with the highest percentage of the population living to age 100 and flourishing have been found to have several things in common. One of them, as you might guess, is that they are mindful in their eating habits. The folks in Sardinia, Italy; Loma Linda, California; and Okinawa, Japan, who were

part of this study are not vegetarians as they do eat meat, but their diet tends to be dominated by a plant-based food that is locally produced and that is rich in colour.

I know that eating a plant-based, fresh-food diet tends to be more expensive than eating mass-produced, processed foods. And I don't want to sound simplistic here, but for some of us, a possible solution might be to have better food but slightly less of it. Again, I don't want to sound simplistic here; just something to consider.

I'm originally from Japan, and the Japanese people, as Yuhei knows, have a saying, "*Hara hachi bunme*," which simply means, "Eat until you feel 80% full." They say this because they know that in half an hour after eating, your food will digest and you will feel pretty much 100% full. The Japanese also tend to eat on smaller plates to discourage overeating. "*Hara hachi bunme*" may be something that we would consider.

But let's not swing to the other extreme either. It's not healthy, according to the experts, to starve yourself or to deny yourself of the foods that you love. If you eat something that you really love in moderation, chances are that that won't kill you. In fact, eating some of your favorite foods may be releasing serotonin and endorphins in your brain that give you more of a sense of wellbeing, so let me add that as a postscript to that paragraph.

As is true of sleeping, as people who know Jesus Christ, we also have greater motivations than other people for eating well and in ways that nourish us. As I mentioned earlier, citing the apostle Paul, if we know Christ, our bodies are temples of God: God's Spirit actually lives inside us – and that should inform our eating choices.

We read in Scripture that when King Solomon was building the temple of God in Jerusalem, he used the finest materials available to him. If you were building a home – a *physical* home – for a loved one, isn't it true that you would build with the very best materials that you could get your hands on? It would just be an expression of your love and respect for that person. Well, you are building a building, a house: Whether you are a carpenter or not, you're building the house of your body, a house in which God dwells – and when you realize that, you'll want to eat in a way that builds that house well.

Eat to the glory of God.

Sleep to the glory of God.

Exercise to the glory of God.

In the opening message in the series, we looked at 1 Timothy 4, where Paul says to his young protégé Timothy and to us, "[T]rain yourself to be godly" (1 Timothy 4:7). Paul also acknowledges that physical training has some value for us.

Megan Oaten and Ken Cheng, who are researchers at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, were part of this fascinating study that looked at the effects of physical exercise on people who had never exercised before. They were looking at six men and eighteen women ranging in age from 18 to 50 years old, and none of these participants had ever regularly exercised before. They were given a membership to a gym for two months and encouraged to use it. Guess what happened to these people? After using their gym membership for two months, the researchers discovered the following about them. Remember, they were not asked to do anything other than use their gym membership on a regular basis.

The 24 participants showed improvements in their attention and ability to ignore distractions. They had reduced their smoking, drinking and caffeine intake, despite the fact that no one had asked them to do that. They were eating less junk food and more healthy food. They were spending less time watching TV and more time studying. They were spending less on impulse purchases and saving more. They felt more in control of their emotions. They

procrastinated less and were less likely to be late for appointments.

All this resulted from simply starting to exercise. It corroborates the research of Dr. James Prochaska at the University of Rhode Island, which found that many people who exercised discovered that they were more focused in their work or their studies, made healthier food choices, were more patient and used their credit cards less often.

The encouraging thing about exercise is that it doesn't necessarily have to be in a gym or on a track. Again, to cite the study of the 100-year-old-plus people who were part of the National Geographic research, the centenarians all were physically active. Some of them exercised in a traditional way – take a look at this guy, for example: His name is Ed Rawlings. Guess how old he is? He's 103. You're impressed; I am, too! He begins every morning with a swim outdoors. He does live in Loma Linda, California; he's a Seventh-day Adventist, but still— That's amazing! But not everyone in the study exercised in a pool or on a track: Some guys, like this centenarian from Okinawa, just biked everywhere or, perhaps, as the photo might suggest, *walked with his bike* everywhere – even more exercise! Or they would work out in their yard – not with weights necessarily but by doing things like building a fence, like this centenarian is doing.

So, you can exercise in a gym, but you can also vigorously vacuum your home – that counts as exercise! You can go dancing or go play with your kids, wrestling with them – that counts as exercise, too! It can be very convenient to integrate exercise into our daily routines.

For example, this morning, I went on a little jog with our dog, Sasha. (This photo was taken right by our house, but it's not from this morning.) Sasha's a golden retriever. She loves to get up and get out, and she helps *me* get up and get out. It's convenient!

I also work at a standing desk. This may not seem like a lot of exercise, but apparently the little micro-movements – especially if you're restless, like I am – count as exercise if you're doing it for long enough. My brother got me onto this; he stands at his standing desk on a wobble-board and that's how he gets his exercise! His balance has improved, too.

Speaking of my younger brother: He became a parent before I did, and I remember that, just before Joey was born, my brother said, "You're about to become a father. Let me tell you from experience" – he's got a boy and a girl – "that boys, generally speaking, tend to have more energy than girls." "Generally speaking" – there are obviously exceptions. He said, "I've been noticing at the playground that a lot of fathers cannot keep up with their sons; they're just huffing and puffing and begging their kids to slow down!" And at that time I just took a mental note of that and said to myself that I'd like to be in a reasonably good condition so as to be able to keep up with our son. (We knew by ultrasound what gender our child was going to be.)

As Jade mentioned last Sunday, whether you are a biological parent or not, if you know Christ, you are or you will be a *spiritual* parent – a spiritual father, a spiritual mother. I can see Krista's getting some exercise right now with August on her back – it's a perfect visual! [*Addressing Krista and August:*] You can wave. But don't lean over too far, okay? Or else we're going to have to pray for you!

And if you know Christ, you're going to be serving others. You may not be in a formal ministry role, but you may be serving people in your neighborhood. The fact is that service, whether you're a parent or not, takes energy. Yet we are called to serve others: Jesus said that he "**came not to be served but to serve**" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45 NLT). Those of us who follow him are called to serve. Serving takes energy – and exercise helps to foster our energy.



So, we have reasons to eat to the glory of God, to sleep to the glory of God and to exercise to the glory of God.

Let me say this about Life Together as I close. We're in this emphasis this year called Life Together, encouraging us to connect in small groups or spiritual friendships to help us persevere in our friendship with Jesus.

There was a study done by the YMCA. The YMCA wanted to be more competitive with their gyms, so they did this massive study on 150,000 of their members. 150,000. That's a lot of members to study! Their assumption was that people join their gyms or their membership centres because they would have state-of-the-art exercise equipment and sparkling, modern facilities. That's why the YMCA has spent, in the last several years, millions and millions of dollars upgrading the facilities, as is true of the Y downtown. But as they continued in their research, they discovered something surprising. They discovered that, indeed, people were *initially* attracted to certain Y's because of the amazing equipment and the accessibility of that equipment to their members. But as they continued their study, they discovered that the reason people *stayed* in the Y and continued to exercise was not because of their amazing equipment; rather, it was because they had gotten to know a staff member or some fellow people at the Y who were exercising, and that emotional connection, that relationship, that acquaintance helped them persevere through their exercise program and stay with it.

The same is true in our lives. If we are surrounded by people who will eat, sleep and exercise to the glory of God, we're more likely to do the same.

As we've been saying in this series, the purpose of these practices is not only so that we will be nourished, not only so that we will benefit, but also so that we can serve God and others better. If our goal is to experience God in our everything, then how we eat, how we sleep and how we exercise – and so meet God in these places – really matters.

Parker Palmer, one of my favorite authors, a Quaker writer whom I never tire of quoting, has said – and some of you have heard this, but it's worth repeating: “[S]elf-care is never a selfish act – it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.”

Let me paraphrase Palmer: Self-care is never a selfish act – it is the stewardship of the only gift you have to offer God and other people in your life.

And so I say, echoing the apostle Paul, “[Therefore, I urge you, ... in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your \[spiritual act of\] worship.](#)”

Let's pray.

How are you doing with sleeping to the glory of God? eating to the glory of God? exercising to the glory of God?

Perhaps in this moment, whether you're faithfully pursuing these things or not, you would say, “God, I want to offer my whole self and my body to you. Show me what this looks like for me. Show me what it looks like for me that I might honour you and serve others well.”

*[silence]*

Take our lives, Lord, we pray, and let them be consecrated, set apart, O Lord, to thee.

Amen.

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## REFLECTION QUESTION

- How can we honour God in our eating, sleeping and exercise?

## RECOMMENDED READING

Shigematsu, Ken. “Eat, Sleep, Swim.” *God in My Everything*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.

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