

Discipline: Body

1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 19-20; James 1:16-18; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:23-30

We've been kicking off 2026 with a series about how to move beyond willpower and enter into a disciplined intentionality in our pursuit of God. Last week we covered the discipline of mind. We were encouraged to control what our mind takes in, carefully grow ourselves with patient study of scripture, and control what our mind dwells on with an established repetition or habit of controlling these inputs.

This week we will be discussing the discipline of the body. I intend to make a case for discipline of the body and make a plan for how to discipline thus.

Respect for God's Creation:

Something we don't cover a lot is God's dominion. Many people think this feels too pushy to think that God owns us and the Earth, but that's kind of a soft position. God is blameless, so He DESERVES our consideration due to his innocence. God is creator, so He's owner and curator of all of this, and holds all sway for what's best in his creation. This consideration and ownership with respect to God includes your body and the larger 'body of Christ'. You were in fact created for a purpose, and that purpose was not your own jollies!!

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Your purpose is to glorify God with your body.

A lot of people's hearts push back on this because we want to have a say in our body, but keep the following in mind. Glorifying God is an ideal that you want because there is no good thing apart from Him, and glorifying Him is the best option for you and Him. God insists on you glorifying Him both out of a love for you and a wish for you to be with Him, as family.

James 1:16-18. Not convinced? Let's hear from a more distinguished and intelligent character than myself.

"God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing," - CS Lewis, Mere Christianity.

"There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it turns from Him". - CS Lewis, The Great Divorce.

The conclusion here is that you should discipline your body because it's a rental and glorifying God is the best use of the rented meat mech that you're driving because glorifying Him with it is to partake of every actually good thing. God's dominion on your body is a GREAT thing!!

Treat your body as a gift, just not for you:

Do you remember going to the first birthday party that wasn't for you and watching another kid open gifts? This is a bit like that.

Read Romans 12:1-2. So if we combine the imagery of this verse with the imagery of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, we see a pattern. Your body is a temple where the Spirit dwells. Your body is a sacrifice actively being offered to God.

What're they getting at? The temple in ancient Israel, most specifically the tabernacle tent, was a place where God's Spirit dwelled and people came to meet Him and have their relationship with Him made right.

The sacrifice at the temple was offered to God to show how the offending party, humans, were laying down their will, laying down what they want, in exchange for a relationship with God. Giving something up to reconcile a relationship.

In one verse, your body, more accurately your person, can be a place where other people meet God. In the other, offering your body for the purpose of serving others is your act of sacrifice and reconciliation. Your capabilities are something you can offer in service of others, but not if you are rendered incapable by failing to take care of your body.... Ouch.

The greatest commandment: You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. Offering your body as a ministry to others and letting it be the place where His spirit dwells is loving the Lord your God by loving your neighbor.

Benefits:

I'm convinced that the apostle Paul was quite physically fit. He really seemed to enjoy debating God with the Greeks using fitness analogies and fitness memes of their day. It's true that this was something that ancient Greeks could understand, but he kept up. He's also a traveling leather worker that somehow makes a living making tents while preaching, teaching, and getting arrested a majority of the time.

So Paul, when speaking to people about God on 2 occasions, uses phrases or memes to make a point about general practice with how to dedicate your body to the Lord.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-13. In this passage, Paul uses this line of thinking to address vice. This is where toes start getting stepped on. Whether it's caffeine, sugar, alcohol, or something less legal; we've all been guilty of engaging our body in something to excess where we liked it, but it was not the best thing for us in the long run.

Everything is permissible, but there is always a line of moderation where, if you cross it, you are no longer a help to anybody. You are no longer glorifying God. You're of the best service when you are able bodied and have all your neurons working. I'm not telling you to stay away from any specific thing, but you do need to know when too far is too far. And what substances should be off limits.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-30. The other instance of this meme that Paul uses is talking about clean-food-laws. It's pretty straight forward how he puts it. There may be something to eat or breathe or whatever that is perfectly ok, but because your neighbor believes that it represents evil, they decide that good doesn't exist and abandon their hope in God since they don't believe it's perfectly ok. A bit drastic, but it happens. It may not seem fair, having someone else's misconception of clean and unclean forced on you, but are you in it for you or are you in it for them?

All this to say: You may be very well versed at moderating food and substances for *your* body, but if someone watching you follows your example while lacking that same restraint or understanding, your example then hurts them. You may have to give up that thing that you do, because someone who looks up to you might not do it responsibly. You may have to give up that thing you do, not because it is wrong, but because someone who looks up to you thinks it's wrong, and may choose a 'perceived' wrong over God or others. It would be a sin of choice rather than a sin of action.

Discipline your body to do what is beneficial. This too serves others and glorifies Him.

Enacting this discipline:

Now that I've made the case for discipline of the body, let's look at how to put it into action. The best way I have to help you with this discipline is simple...Motivation.

Everything we've looked at on making a case for discipline of the body involves one common thread...Glorify God by using your physical person to help others. You must be able bodied, to spring into action in an emergency. You must have a clear, unaddicted mind to respond to a difficult or threatening situation. You must consider what is of benefit to you or others with your habits.

Never put yourself in a situation where you wish you could have done a better job at helping someone, but you didn't think you'd have to keep yourself prepared and healthy. So you failed.

The temple was where God helped people and reconciled wrongs. The spirit now dwells in you. Or at least, I hope it does... You are now a mobile temple ready to assist, but are the walls sturdy? Does the roof leak?

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul describes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers as making up the body of Christ, the Church. Keeping up your physicality can also include consideration for your role. What you're gifted with does partly depend upon you being able to go when called. There's so much more involved with taking care of your body than 'how you feel'.

Conclusion:

Let's bring everything together in a review in 2 sentences. *What motivates us to discipline our body should not be our health and feelings, rather it should be to achieve the maximum benefit for our bodies by avoiding vices, excess, and deficiencies in the interest of Glorifying God our Creator and Owner by way of using our physicality to enact the most benefit for our neighbor using both our physical ability and consideration in moderation. We should not prepare our bodies for our best and most relaxed vacation day, but we should prepare our bodies for everyone else's very-worst & most-dangerous day.*

Eat healthy. Listening to a trustworthy doctor. Build up your stamina and strength. Do not listen to health advice on social media. If someone is in danger of abusing a substance or having

a conflict with you because they see you sipping something more adult, consider not letting them see you do it. Everything for the benefit and glory.

Reflection Questions:

- How does viewing God as a *good Creator and curator* (rather than a controlling owner) change the way you think about His authority over your body?
- How does Romans 12:1–2 challenge the idea that spiritual worship is disconnected from physical habits?
- Where do you personally struggle most with excess—food, drink, caffeine, media, rest, work, or something else? How do you discern the line between healthy enjoyment and loss of self-control?
- What specific habit could you change this month to better serve others and glorify God?