

Day 1

A Short Theology of the Body

If I could speak to my thirty-year-old self about aging well, what would I say? And what would I say to those who, like me, are already in their later years and are living with the limitations that often accompany aging?

To both groups I would ask a simple question: How healthy are you physically at present?

Using the metaphor of a six-cell battery, where would the indicator sit for each of the following areas:

- Exercise
- Sleep
- Diet
- Limitations

Excellent-Very Good-Good-Not Good-Poor

Before we look more closely at each of these four aspects of physical health, it may be helpful to step back and consider a short theology of the body. Whether you are forty or seventy, the principles are the same.

God designed our bodies

They are breathtakingly constructed. ***“Fearfully and wonderfully made”*** is the way Psalm 139:14 describes them. Human bone marrow, for example, produces roughly two billion red blood cells every second, and pound for pound, healthy bones are remarkably strong—stronger than many forms of steel.

We need to care for them throughout life

God created all things good, including our bodies. ***Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come,*** is the advice of the Teacher in Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Notice the word ***before***. It appears three times in this chapter, reminding us to live wisely and well before the curtain comes down. Wise stewardship of the body begins early, but it remains important throughout life.

Our bodies belong to God

Speaking to fellow Christ-followers, Paul said, *“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.”*

Our bodies were created by God, and although we wandered away from him, he bought them back at the infinite cost of the death of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sin affects our bodies

Because of human sin, our bodies are not what they should be. As Paul reminds us, *Though our outer selves are wasting away, our inner selves are being renewed day by day* (2 Corinthians 4:16). Because we live in a fallen world, our bodies break down from time to time. Some become chronically ill, some are injured, some live with disabilities, and some face terminal illness.

In this devotional, we will look at what we can do to age well and to stay as fit and healthy as possible. However, we must also acknowledge devastating physical challenges, such as Lou Gehrig's disease, which one of my closest friends contracted, despite his being young and in peak condition.

Spiritual and physical health are vitally interconnected

I appeal to you therefore brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)

In this life-transforming verse, Paul could have said, "present yourselves," but he chose the word **bodies**. This call to a worshipful life is an appeal to offer up to God everything our bodies are and everything our bodies do. How I care for my body, and what I do with my body can be a profoundly spiritual act. "In view of God's mercies"—a phrase which captures the essence of Romans chapters 1-11—bring this body of yours to God as a living sacrifice. Just as worshippers in the Old Covenant brought animals as sacrifices, and just as Abraham was prepared to offer his son Isaac to God, so Paul calls us to bring our bodies sacrificially in worship.

In the rest of this devotional, we will look more closely at the importance of regular exercise, a healthy diet, adequate sleep, and maintaining healthy energy levels, so that the battery God has entrusted to us remains as well charged as it can be.

Paul's words in Romans 12:1 elevate these physical disciplines from merely looking in good shape or extending longevity to ways of worshipping God with our bodies.

What an honor!

As you age, taking care of this one body God has given you, may be one of the most spiritual things you will do.

Reflect & Discuss

1. If you were to look honestly at your "battery indicators" for exercise, sleep, diet, and energy levels, which area is strongest at present? Which area most needs attention?
2. Which truth from today's devotional speaks most powerfully to you: that God designed your body, that it belongs to him, or that caring for it can be an act of worship? Why?

3. “What is one practical step you can take this week to better care for the body God has entrusted to you?”

Prayer

Father, thank you for creating me fearfully and wonderfully. Thank you that through Christ I belong to you, body and soul. Help me to be a wise steward of the body you have given me, whether I am young or old, strong or weak. May the way I care for my body become an act of worship that honors you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Scriptures for Further Meditation

- Romans 12:1-2
- Psalm 139:13-16
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18