



THE BALANCED LIFE

Nearer My Couch to Thee

Maybe you've tried all the diets and exercise plans. Maybe you're thinking either they don't work or you can't stick with them. Feel like giving up? God has given you only one body in this life. The most basic form of stewardship is to learn how God would have you care for this precious gift.

Genesis 1:26-31 Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

For Personal Study

Health clubs seem to have a lot of mirrors. If you observe the activity at a health club, you'll notice many people spend time looking at their body in the mirrors. You can just imagine the questions: Do my arms look firmer? Is my stomach flatter? Even outside of health clubs, it seems mirrors get quite a workout by humans. We all look in mirrors whenever there is one around. What is this fascination?

Today's scripture tells us God "... created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them". In this creation story God deliberately and purposefully created humankind and did so with a plan. What does His *image* mean?

God created in us all of the aspects of Him, not just a physical representation. Since he gave us the world to look after, he gave us His compassion, so that we would care for His creation. He gave us knowledge so that we would learn how to better care for all the crea-

tures in the world, the land, and the seas. His 'image' is all of what He is. So how do we care for that which God gave us in His image, namely ourselves?

We would all agree that God is in pretty good shape, physically, mentally, spiritually. Jesus also was in top form, traveling all over the countryside, up and down hills, praying, preaching, teaching, and caring for all people and all things. These are our role models. As we strive to be better Christians, we have to recognize that we must care for all aspects of ourselves, there is no one part of us that deserves better than the other. How would you improve the balance of your physical, spiritual and mental self? Where can you find help and support in improving the quality of your life? From the very beginning God created community (woman and man together) for the purpose of helping and supporting each other.

In our post-modern world our lives are often very busy. Between long commutes, endless activities for the kids, and the hassles of

keeping the family going we sometimes neglect our most personal gift from God, our selves. Think of what Jesus did in three short years, constantly on the move, teaching, healing, caring. Yet Jesus always took time to rest, to care for the body that His Father provided him. We know what Jesus would do, what will you do to care for your self wholly and regularly?

What if the mirrors we use daily also provided an instant 'grade' on how well we reflect the image of God? What do you imagine you'd be doing differently day to day? How would living daily in the love of Christ, daily turning your life over to Him, change your habits and activities to better care for all parts of His image in you?

Resources:

[A Passionate Life](#), Mike Breen & Walt Kallestad, © 2005.

Online Life Expectancy Calculator
<http://gosset.wharton.upenn.edu/mortality/perl/CalcForm.html>

Readings & Questions

Monday, October 2

Isaiah 40:30-31

Galatians 5:7-8

Consider God's way vs. the world's way for a physically healthy life. What stops us from following God's best?

Tuesday, October 3

Proverbs 3:1-8

How would you improve the balance of your physical, spiritual and/or mental self? What simple step could you take this week to move in that direction?

Wednesday, October 4

Hebrews 12:1-3

Self control and discipline help us persevere. What could you do differently day to day to make good choices that benefit you for the long haul?

Thursday, October 5

Titus 2:11-13

2 Timothy 1:7

What helps you be diligent in living *in the image of God*? How do you help others do this?

Friday, October 6

1 Timothy 4:8, 15-16

Deuteronomy 6:1-3

How do the lessons we learn in godly stewardship of our body & health carry over to other aspects of our life? Who do you impact by the stewardship of your body?

Prayer for the week:

Father, you made me in your image and I know that I fall short of your plan. Help me make better choices today for my health. Give me perseverance through the help of your Spirit. I want to live at my best for you and my family. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Balanced Life ...for Families

Discussion Starters

- (Try at dinnertime, bedtime, or Sunday lunch)
- If you gave someone a gift, how would you feel if they *didn't* take good care of it? How would you feel if they took *special* care of it? Does God care about what you eat or if you spend lots of time sitting in front of the TV or computer?
 - God has a plan for your life. If you don't take care of your body, how does that affect God's plan?
 - What's one thing we each could change this week that would help us care for our bodies? What change might we add next week?

Kids:
60+ min.
of exercise
daily

Parents:

Exercise for teens or kids usually comes in 3 forms: **Play** (recess, fun outside, gym class...), **Structured Activity** (dance, soccer, stairs, family walks...), and **Lifestyle** (walking to school, choosing your kids, yourself, and your family together. Keep it fun and not stressful, and they will want to do more!

TEENS...

If you gave someone a gift, wouldn't you want them to take care of it? Consider this: your body is God's gift to you. So taking care of your body is an important way that you can honor God. When you make smart food choices and are physically active, you are celebrating the amazing gift that the Lord has given you.

In the midst of your busy life, sometimes you need a quick boost. It's so easy to reach for sugary or fried foods, or maybe you think some caffeine will do the trick. You may want to consider healthier alternatives that provide tons of energy without the negative consequences. Need ideas? Try popcorn (but not the kind that's doused in butter), an apple with peanut butter, some yogurt and fruit, or a tortilla with melted cheese topped with salsa. And sometimes all you need is a cold glass of H₂O.

Or maybe food isn't the answer at all – perhaps exercise will give you the extra energy you need. Regular exercise will also help you sleep better, feel more peaceful and happy, and maintain a healthy weight. As a bonus, you'll cut your risk of developing many diseases, including type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure which have become more common among teens in recent years.

Instead of pizza every day for lunch, try a variety of veggies, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean proteins. Watch portions. Fill up on veggies and fruit. Don't skip meals.

Simple Choices for a Healthy Balance

- No food is off-limits. Moderation is the key!
- Eat 3 meals plus 1-2 healthy snacks a day.
- You may feel hungry when you're actually thirsty. Try ice water flavored with a little lemon juice.

Teens & Adults: at least 30-60 min. exercise daily