



## HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS

At some point, you may have attended a conference where someone relayed important *housekeeping matters at the beginning*. *Housekeeping matters* are often important details that will help the conference run smoothly, like hotel checkout time, restroom locations, scheduled break times, airport shuttle departures, and so on.

In this article, however, I would like to suggest we frame this idea in a different way: “It *matters* how we *keep* our *house*.” In other words, *housekeeping really matters*. The *house* I am suggesting that we need to be *keeping* is not the one made of wood and bricks that contains our stuff, but the one made of flesh and blood that houses us and the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 3:16 (ESV), *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* Notice our body is *God's temple*, and as such we need to treat it as our mutual dwelling place. There are three important reasons why it really does *matter* how well we are *keeping* our *house*.

### #1 Housekeeping Matters Because It Is Commanded

I often hear people make off-handed comments suggesting that God isn't all that concerned about what we eat or how well we take care of our bodies...because, after all, we are going to get a new, perfect one later. They will often quote Romans 14:14, where Paul assesses food in general, *I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself*. They conclude that anything that can be chewed up and swallowed is acceptable fare for consumption, and God really doesn't care what we eat.

Regarding exercise, I hear frequently mentioned I Timothy 4:8 (NASB) where Paul says, *for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things*. They conclude that because spiritual exercise is of greater value than physical exercise, physical exercise is unimportant. But as caretakers of bodies that do not belong to us, I would like to suggest that we consider a broader perspective on the feeding and exercise of the bodies that God has entrusted to us. Most believers are quite familiar with I Peter 1:15-16 (ESV), which says, *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'* Few realize that this is actually a quote from the Old Testament. And it may surprise you to know the original context of this phrase *be holy for I am holy*.

In Leviticus 11:44-45, God is giving dietary directions to the children of Israel. He says, *For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*” This concept of being holy comes right out of the middle of a chapter where God is telling His children what to eat and what not to eat. Keep in mind the word “holy” also means “pure.” Apparently God does not want his children to defile the *houses* He has given them by consuming things that will physically defile (pollute/abuse) those physical *houses*. We must understand that how we feed our *house* is not a means to

spiritual approval. Paul points this out in I Corinthians 8:8 when he declares, *Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off [spiritually] if we do not eat, and no better off [spiritually] if we do.* How we keep our house will have no effect on us after we leave this life. However, it will have a significant and often long-term effect on us while we are still in this life.

In spite of his comment, Paul still understood the need for strict physical discipline and the tragic spiritual ramifications of neglecting such discipline. In I Corinthians 9:27 (NASB) he says, *but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.* What and how much we eat and drink have been regarded as important physical issues with considerable spiritual ramifications for many centuries. As far back as the fourth century, the church listed gluttony as one of the seven deadly/cardinal sins. Physical housekeeping really does matter.

## **#2 Housekeeping Matters Because It Is Worship**

Paul gives us a second perspective on the extent that *housekeeping matters* when he challenges us in Romans 12:1, *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.* Paul makes this same point in answering his own rhetorical question in I Corinthians 6:19-20, *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.* We are to be glorifying God *with* and *in* our bodies. In both of these passages, Paul connects our physical and spiritual lives together. He tells us that how we keep our *house* should glorify Him as an outward, physical expression of our worship of Him. Is how you keep your body an act of worship for you? Does the current condition of your *house* bring Him glory? Is your housekeeping a clear demonstration of your loving and careful management of the dwelling place He has entrusted to you? Physical housekeeping really does matter.

## **#3 Housekeeping Matters Because It Is Smart**

Even if God hadn't commanded us to take good care of our *houses*, and even if He hadn't told us that we worship Him by what we do with our bodies, there is another compelling and entirely pragmatic reason to take good care of our bodies as responsible housekeepers. It has been my observation over the years that *any asset left unmanaged becomes a liability.* I have found no exception to this maxim, whether it be materials things, relationships, or businesses...you name it. If you buy a new car and never service it, your asset will eventually turn into a liability. Likewise, if you do not properly "service" your body, it will eventually become a liability too—sooner than it should.

The Center for Disease Control's report on the health of Americans is staggering. It estimates that of the American adult population, 71.6% are considered overweight or obese, while 78% are not even meeting basic activity level recommendations. Related to this, 2.75 million deaths that occur in the United States each year, 64% are the result of avoidable nutritional factor diseases. In other words, 64% of Americans are suffering and ultimately dying prematurely from self-inflicted degenerative diseases due to the poor care and feeding of their *houses*.

Can you imagine the hundreds of millions of dollars of God's money that God's people are needlessly spending on drugs, surgeries, and healthcare to treat the physical maladies that they have brought upon themselves by

failing to make good long-term lifestyle decisions? God's asset has been turned into a liability. It is just smart to do whatever we possibly can to allow our *houses* to retain their vigor, their health, and their vitality as long as possible. Because of the curse of Adam, all of our bodies are going to eventually wear out and cease to operate. But doesn't it make sense to postpone that time as long as possible by taking good care of our *houses* so they remain an asset that God can use for His purposes and His glory? The healthier we remain, the more useful we can be for God's Kingdom and for His purposes.

If you knew that the next car you bought would be the last car you would ever own, and that it was going to have to last for decades, and that you were going to have to live with whatever condition it was in, would you care for your car differently? I would. How much more should we treat our most valuable physical asset with meticulous care? This is the only body we are going to get this side of glory. If you would like to develop a healthier lifestyle—become a better *housekeeper*—I would suggest you start with the book *The Maker's Diet* by Jordon Rubin, and then go from there. And don't forget the *Owner's Manual*. You would be absolutely amazed at what God has told us in His Manual about health, disease, diet, exercise, etc. I hope as you pray and seek the mind of the Lord on this important but often ignored area of stewardship that you will come to agree with me that *housekeeping matters*.

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