

LIVING THE APPLIED LIFE

Applied to Our Bodies: Housekeeping Matters

Any asset left unmanaged becomes a liability. I have found no exception to this maxim whether it be materials things, relationships or businesses. If you buy a new car and never service the car, your asset will eventually turn into a liability. Likewise, if you do not properly “service” your body, it will eventually become a liability too.

Many of you have likely attended a conference where someone gets up at the beginning of the conference to go over important *housekeeping matters* you need to know. *Housekeeping matters* are often important minor details that will help the conference run more 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 an alternate understanding of the phrase, “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 is the one made of flesh and blood that houses us and the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 3:16, “*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 consume.

Regarding exercise I hear frequently mentioned I Timothy 4:8 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 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 context of where this phrase “*be holy for I am holy*” comes from.

In Leviticus 11:44-45 God is giving dietary directions to the children of Israel, “*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 for I am 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, “*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 affect on us after we leave this life. However, it can and will have a massive and often long-term affect 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 for failing to maintain such discipline. In I Corinthians 9:27 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 we eat and drink and how much we eat and drink has continually been an important physical issue with considerable spiritual ramifications for many centuries. It was as far back as the 4th century when the church first 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 these passages Paul connects our physical and spiritual lives together. He tells us that how well we keep our *house* should glorify Him and be 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 still a third entirely pragmatic reason to take good care of our bodies that should itself be a compelling enough reason to be 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 the car, 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 300 million Americans, 63% are considered overweight or obese; 80% of Americans over 25 are overweight; 78% of American's are not even meeting basic activity level recommendations.

According to former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. C. Everett Koop, (1982-1989) of the 2.4 million deaths that occur in the United States each year, 75% are the result of avoidable nutritional factor diseases. In other words, 75% 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 God's people are needlessly spending on drugs, surgeries and healthcare to attempt to recover from 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 more healthy 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 was going to be the last car you would ever own; if you knew that it was going to have to last for decades and even though there are some replacement parts available, 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*.

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. I Corinthians 3:16 says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s spirit dwells in you?” What excuses or justifications have you made in the past to not care for the temple that God has entrusted to you?

2. I Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us, “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.” How well are you doing in glorifying God in your body?

3. Have you ever noticed how being in good shape physically actually helps you to be in better shape spiritually? Share some personal examples of this.

4. Have you ever participated in an extended fast (more than 24 hours)? Why do you think the physical and spiritual exercise of fasting has been virtually abandoned by Christians today?

5. Romans 12:1 states that you need to be “presenting your bodies as living sacrifices . . . of worship.” Have you ever thought that how you feed and care for your body is actually a form of worship? Does that give you greater or less motivation to take better care of your body?

6. Is our relationship to Christ affected by our care and feeding of the temple that He has entrusted to us? Is our salvation at stake if we do not take good care of our body? If not, then why should it matter how well you care for it? Isn’t salvation all that really matters?

7. If you knew you were only going to get one car to drive for your entire life, would you care for it differently than you would if you knew you could trade it in on a new one in a few years? How, then, might we need to be more careful about how we care for our bodies since it is the only one we get for our entire lives?

8. What do the statistics mentioned from the Center of Disease Control tell us about how well we are taking care of our bodies and our health? Why are they so ominous?

9. Should a follower of Jesus be more or less concerned about taking good care of his physical body than an unbeliever?

10. Why are Christians as a whole in just as bad of physical shape as unbelievers?

11. With all this new information on good housekeeping and its importance, what changes do you intend to make to do a better job of caring for His temple? What are you going to start doing differently?