

3. Celebrating Spiritual and Physical Fitness (2Q 2010—Health and Healing)

Biblical material: Ps. 139:13-15; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 9:24–27; Eph. 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:7; 2:3–5; Heb. 11:6, Isaiah 40:31.

Quotes

- Better hunt in fields for health unbought, Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught, The wise, for cure, on exercise depend, God never made his work for man to mend. *John Dryden*
- The... patient should be made to understand that he or she must take charge of his own life. Don't take your body to the doctor as if he were a repair shop. *Quentin Regestein*
- Money may buy the husk of things, but not the kernel. It brings you food but not appetite, medicine but not health, acquaintances but not friends, servants but not faithfulness, days of joy but not peace or happiness. *Henrik Ibsen*
- The greatest wealth is health. *Virgil*
- Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. *World Health Organization, 1948*
- When it comes to eating right and exercising, there is no "I'll start tomorrow." Tomorrow is disease. *V.L. Allineare*
- Anybody can exercise... but this kind of lethargy takes real discipline. *Garfield the Cat*
- Eat right, exercise regularly, die anyway. *Author Unknown*

Questions

How does physical exercise relate to spiritual health? Why does God care how we treat our bodies? Shouldn't we consider spiritual issues as far more important than physical ones? How do we represent God in the way we live? What of the modern fitness craze—isn't this another example of selfishness? How are we to be truly fit?

Bible discussion

"You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb." (Ps. 139:13 TEV). We are also the temple of the Holy Spirit—the place where God lives (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). Paul tells the believers in Corinth to run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24–27), while reminding the Ephesians that we do not gain salvation by our works, but by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8). Paul affirms that he has run the race to the end (2 Tim. 4:7) and has been on "active duty" (2 Tim. 2:3–5). Isaiah reminds us that "those who trust in the LORD for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak." (40:31 TEV).

Comment 1

"As a result of the immobilization, the muscles related to that particular area are not used. With this lack of use, a process of atrophy or wasting occurs... So it is with faith. If faith is not exercised, it does not grow. The vital movements and actions of the limbs and body of faith cannot take place. Though faith is a gift, if it is not exercised, if we do not make choices based on it, if we do not reach out and by it claim God's

promises, if we are not willing to take chances based on faith, if we will not exercise faith to the point of being brought to our knees in submission and humility—then we are in danger of losing it.” (Monday’s lesson).

As we think of how we treat ourselves and others, what are we really seeking to achieve? Are we looking to produce some kind of outward appearance of health, or do we truly wish to change what is happening on the inside. Take the example of those who suffer from mental illness. Do we worry so much about their odd actions, the way they behave, what they do? Or do we try to help by curing the internal disease, trying to heal what they are, not fixing what they do.

It’s the same with sin. Jesus is not after outward conformity. He wants a cured heart. Over and over again Jesus re-emphasizes this point. How did Jesus announce his ministry? Luke 4:18 (a quote from Is. 61:1,2 -- showing that the God of the OT just as keen on healing): “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted.” What a promise! What a clear demonstration of what he wanted to do for the downtrodden, sick and spiritually diseased people around him. And what a promise for us too! He wants to free us from the sickness of sin. That is true salvation -- for in the end, you will be healed completely, and sin’s disease will be gone; and you won’t even want to sin any more.

God has always been like that. He has always been “the Lord who heals you”. He promises in Jer. 3:22 and Hosea 14:4: “I will heal their backslidings.” He says in Ps. 147:3 that “he heals the broken in heart.” David cried out to God in Psalm 41:4: “Lord be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.” And in that prophecy of the healing Messiah to come we hear: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Is. 53:5. “For the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.” Malachi 4:2.

No question about it. Sin is a terrible sickness of the soul, and God is the only one who can heal us. There are many dread diseases in our world today, despite medical advances. Imagine you’re sick. Maybe you don’t even know. But the doctor diagnoses some major problem. Do you ignore it and hope it goes away? Do you pretend nothing’s wrong? Or do you go to the only one who can treat you and make you well again? Obvious, isn’t it? Even our children here can see that. Yet when it comes to our spiritual sickness we should listen to our children. They know more than we do, for we so often turn away from the God who promises to heal us.

Whose fault is it if we refuse to admit anything is wrong? Or if we tear up the prescription? Or if we secretly flush the pills away? Or if we refuse permission for a life-saving operation?

We often say today, “Oh, if only we could have a true miracle right now. How much easier it would be to believe. But in truth, Jesus’ miracles were for one purpose: to show us a loving God. Don’t be fooled by the ‘faith-healers’ of the present. Remember: “Every miracle (that Jesus performed) was of a character to lead the people to the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of nations.” (DA 366).

We should take the advice of James 5:16 seriously: “pray for one another -- that ye may be healed.” Remember that this is the true meaning of salvation. And we are to follow the Lord’s example in never hurting or spreading sin’s disease, but in loving and caring for each other. We too are to heal the brokenhearted and the backslidden, the blind

in spirit and the lame on the Christian way. Remember the God we serve, the Lord that heals us. And may there be true spiritual healing among us here, in our lives, and in our sin-sick hearts. This is true spiritual exercise!

Comment 2

Live in rooms full of light

Avoid heavy food

Be moderate in the drinking of wine

Take massage, baths, exercise, and gymnastics

Fight insomnia with gentle rocking or the sound of running water

Change surroundings and take long journeys

Strictly avoid frightening ideas

Indulge in cheerful conversation and amusements

Listen to music.

—*A. Cornelius Celsus*

Ellen White Comments

The time spent in physical exercise is not lost. . . . A proportionate exercise of all the organs and faculties of the body is essential to the best work of each. When the brain is constantly taxed while the other organs of the living machinery are inactive, there is a loss of strength, physical and mental. The physical system is robbed of its healthful tone, the mind loses its freshness and vigor, and a morbid excitability is the result. {AH 494}

All the varied capabilities that men possess--of mind and soul and body--are given them by God, to be so employed as to reach the highest possible degree of excellence. But this cannot be a selfish and exclusive culture; for the character of God, whose likeness we are to receive, is benevolence and love. Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us, is to be employed for his glory and for the uplifting of our fellow-men. And in this employment is found its purest, noblest, and happiest exercise. {CE 64}

The exercise that develops mind and character, that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life's burdens, is that which gives physical strength and quickens every faculty. And there is a reward in virtuous industry, in the cultivation of the habit of living to do good. {AH 506}

There are plenty of necessary, useful things to do in our world that would make the pleasure amusement exercise almost wholly unnecessary. Brain, bone, and muscle will acquire solidity and strength in using them to a purpose, doing good, hard thinking, and devising plans which shall train them to develop powers of intellect and strength of the physical organs, which will be putting into practical use their God-given talents with which they may glorify God. {AH 509}

We must have that faith in God that takes him at his word... In order to exercise intelligent faith, we should study the Word of God. The Bible, and the Bible alone, communicates a correct knowledge of the character of God, and of his will concerning us. The duty and the destiny of man are defined in its pages. The conditions on which we may hope for eternal life are explicitly stated, and the doom of those who neglect so great salvation is foretold in the most forcible language. {RH, September 27, 1910}