

At the Corner of Happy, Healthy, and Holy sermon series

“Honor God With Your Body”

[1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)

Did you know that making New Year’s resolutions is an ancient old tradition? The Babylonians, some 4,000 years ago, are the first recorded civilization to ring in the New Year with celebrations and commitments. They made promises to their gods that they would behave better during the coming year in hopes of better fortune in the year ahead. And this is a practice still going strong today. At the dawn of a new year, millions of people around the world resolve to make positive changes in their lives. We make resolutions every year, hoping for a better future, though perhaps many of us have drifted away from them by now.

Here are the top 10 New Year’s resolutions for this year according to a recent survey:

1. Diet or eat healthier (71%)
2. Exercise more (65%)
3. Lose weight (54%)
4. Save more and spend less (32%)
5. Learn a new skill or hobby (26%)
6. Quit smoking (21%)
7. Read more (17%)
8. Find another job (16%)
9. Drink less alcohol (15%)
10. Spend more time with family and friends (13%)

The top three on this list - eat healthier, exercise more, and lose weight - were what Reverend Rick Warren resolved to do when he came to a health-related discovery about his congregation and himself several years ago.

As you may be aware, Warren is the lead pastor of Saddleback Church, the mega church in Southern California and also the author of the bestselling book, “The Purpose Driven Life.” He has a lesser known bestselling book that he published in 2012 called, *The Daniel Plan, 40 Days to a Healthier Life*.

Rooted in the biblical story of Daniel in the Old Testament, Rev. Warren’s book emphasizes eating more vegetables and fruits and whole grains while cutting down on meat and getting regular exercise. On the day his church held a rally to kick off this diet plan, local grocery stores actually ran out of vegetables!

He came up with the idea for his book after a marathon baptism session. It was Easter weekend, and there were over 850 people seeking to be baptized the old-fashioned way - by being lowered into the water. As he was baptizing the 500th person, he had a sudden realization, ‘Man, we’re all fat! We’re all overweight!’

After the mass baptism, Warren decided to get in shape and made an announcement to his congregation that he would lose 90 pounds and asked if anyone wanted to join him. In just a week, some 12,000 people had signed up.

In the first year and a half of his resolution, Rev. Warren lost 65 pounds, but then gained back 35 pounds after experiencing severe back problems and grieving the loss of his 27-year old son, who committed suicide. Determined to keep the promise he made to God and to his congregation, he got back on his daily diet and exercise schedule. So, before the release of his book, he was able to shed off the 35 pounds that he had gained back.

It was about 5 years ago that I heard about Warren and his church-wide weight loss effort, and I don't know if he was able to lose 25 more pounds to reach his original goal of losing 90 pounds or not. Regardless, I am sure he and his congregation are healthier now than ever before following their commitment to live a healthier lifestyle through the diet and exercise program.

This is the second Sunday of our sermon series, "At the Corner of Happy, Healthy, and Holy," and today's focus is on our bodies and physical health. Perhaps, this is the first time you are hearing a sermon on this topic. While our culture is obsessed with physical health and beauty, the church has largely been silent on this matter. Preachers like to talk about the transformation and renewal of souls and minds, but neglect to address our bodies as if they do not matter.

But, they do matter. Our bodies matter because we are an integrated whole of body, soul, and mind. Truly, these three components of our existence are all connected together. We know that the body is crucial to the health of the soul and mind. We know it from our experience of getting sick. No matter how great your intentions are or how strong your will is, regardless of how fervent your faith is, when you are sick with even a common cold, your normal routine is interrupted and you cannot function properly.

Yet, despite this personal knowledge, one common misperception many Christians believers have is that God is interested only in our souls and that everything will be okay if our souls are in a healthy state. Some people even consider neglecting the body as a mark of taking spirituality seriously. However, this is not a biblical view of the body as today's scripture reading clearly indicates. What Nicole read for us is the conclusion of the apostle Paul's broader theology of the body, which is found in 1 Corinthians, chapter 6.

In the first century, influenced by the extreme body/mind dualism of popular Greek thinking and the Gnostic idea that matter is evil, many Christians in the city of Corinth believed that the body was not important and that they could do whatever they wanted with their bodies. Some people even thought that they could commit sins in their bodies without affecting their souls because body and soul were completely separated.

As you can imagine, this view of the body among first century Christian believers and their practices created problems within the church. So, in his letter to Christians in Corinth and elsewhere, Paul addressed this issue of dualism, especially concerning the issue of sexual immorality among them.

Let us hear what Paul said in today's scripture again:

Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Don't you know that you have the Holy Spirit from God, and you don't belong to yourselves? You have been bought and paid for, so honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

In this short text, Paul tells us 4 things about our body. First, he says, "**Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.** The first hearers of Paul's letter understood what he meant by this. For the people of Israel, the temple was the most beautiful place, the holy place dedicated to worship God, where God was thought to reside. So, they built it with great devotion, using the best materials they could get and they took care of it with a sense of reverence.

When you look at yourself in the mirror, what do you see? Regardless of its shape, size and color, no matter what other people say about it or even what you think of it, your body is absolutely beautiful in God's sight. Why? It's because, as the creation story in the book of Genesis tells us, God created your body in God's image and declared it to be good.

As the writer of Psalm 139 sang long ago, you were fearfully and wonderfully made by God. Every detail of your body, every cell and organ are God's handiwork. And, the one who created you in your mother's womb is now living in you!

The woman I see in the mirror when I stand before it to brush my teeth in the morning is not in her best self without her makeup despite a good night's sleep. But, I still tell her this, "Ouk-Yean, God's beloved daughter. You are so beautiful." This simple act that I do daily always brings a smile to my face and lifts up my spirit.

Second, Paul says, "**Your body does not belong to yourself but to God.**" Our culture constantly tells us that our body belongs to us, so we can do whatever we want to do with our body. But, God says otherwise. "Not you but I am the owner of your body because I created you. You are not the owner, but a steward, a caretaker of your body. And, I expect you to take care of my creation with utmost respect and care."

Honestly, I did not really think about my health and my responsibility to take care of my body until I turned 40. Someone had commented that everything would go down the hill once I turned 40. I thought, 'Well, if I cannot change the reality of aging, at least, I should try to slow down its speed.' So, I decided to adopt three new habits for the sake of my health: 1. Eat breakfast; 2. Take vitamins; 3. Exercise. Of course, adopting the new habits did not happen overnight. But, slowly, over time, all three became part of my daily and weekly routine.

It has been 20 years since then. I can tell you that, by the grace of God, I have been able to stick to my old resolutions though I was on and off with my exercise. And I also adopted a few more health habits along the way.

Now, despite some signs of aging I notice on my body and some weight I have gained since moving out to California a year and a half ago, I still feel pretty healthy, energetic, and happy. My hairdresser tells me, I should be able to fool people about my real age for a while, as long as I dye my hair!

Third, Paul says, **You have been bought and paid for.** Through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we have been delivered from the bondage of sins and reconciled to God. Jesus died, so that we could live. Jesus paid the price for our release from sin and its punishment. Do you want to know how valuable your life is to God? Just look at the cross and know that your worth is priceless.

Fourth, Paul says, **So, honor God with your body.** We honor God with our body when we are a good steward of it. Do not abuse your body by consuming things harmful to it or neglecting its needs. Do not misuse your body for pleasure. But take good care of it through healthy eating, appropriate exercise, and adequate rest and sleep. Though taking good care of our body does not guarantee a life without illness, not doing so will increase our chances of getting sick or weak.

We honor God with our body when we remember our value. Remember that you are beautiful and precious in God's eyes because you are God's handiwork. Remember that you are God's dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit. Remember that Jesus died for you, so that you would be released from sin and live eternally.

We also honor God with our body when we serve others with it. Our hands and feet, our eyes and ears, our intellects and voices, everything we have on our body are tools of the Holy Spirit. God has given them to us, so we can bless others with them. So, honor God with your body by serving, helping, blessing the people God puts in your path, by bringing God's love and peace into the places that desperately need them.

At the direction of John Wesley, the early Methodists asked one another in their worship and small group gatherings, "How is it with your soul?" Today, I would like to ask you the question a little differently. How is it with your body? Are you treating your body as God desires? Are you honoring God with your body?

I seek to stay in the best possible health, so I can continue to honor God with my body as long as I have another breath to take. And, I invite you to join me in making such an effort. Would you join me in honoring God through your body, as well as your soul and mind? As the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome "Let us offer bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship."

Amen.