

5 Wondrous Ways Christian Women Should Care for Themselves

If self-care is an unbiblical concept, what does that mean for Christian women and their need to care for themselves?

This is a very important question we must answer, because the danger in leaving that question unresolved is the tendency to jump to the other extreme of neglecting ourselves in service to others.

Neither the modern concept of self-care nor the tendency to neglect our spiritual, physical and emotional needs is biblical.

Jesus didn't neglect His spiritual, physical and emotional needs to serve His disciples and followers.

We see repeatedly in the Gospels that Jesus took time away from people to get alone with the Father. And I think it is not coincidental at all that we read about this in the Bible, because we need Jesus' example to give us balance.

Though the modern concept of self-care is rooted in humanistic and New Age ideas and doctrine, it is still necessary for women to be intentional about caring for physical and emotional needs.

But the motivation behind it is just as important. And here's why:

A mark of true Christianity is humility. Humility isn't thinking of yourself less, it is not thinking about yourself at all. It is the ability to live without being preoccupied with ourselves.

And this is what I'm striving for in my own life.

For so many years, I've been preoccupied with myself: how I look, how I come across to others and whether or not I stand out too much.

But through the years, I've been able to turn off a lot of these thoughts in order to strive to be more concerned with others' feeling of comfort than my own.

But this doesn't mean I neglect caring for my spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

What it means is that I realize that in caring for my needs, I free myself to be able to continue making others' concerns a priority.

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Here is how I feel that caring for ourselves differs from self-care.

Self-care is inward-focused. It's all about giving to myself first so I can give to others. Even I have been guilty of saying this exact thing.

But I've begun looking at this from a whole different perspective.

I've begun thinking of caring for myself as another way of giving to my family and to those God has entrusted to me for ministry.

It's not about giving to me at all. I am not in this equation.

God has given me this body to serve with, and I care for my body so that I can continue to serve in the way God has called me to serve, and so that my whole body (spirit, soul and physical body) is a testimony to His greatness.

Self-care also assumes that my spiritual, physical and emotional health and well-being rely solely on what I do or don't do.

But it is God who created our bodies.

We can do all of the things I've listed below and still find ourselves struggling physically and emotionally, and yet still live in peace and joy knowing that God is still God, despite our momentary struggles on earth.

1. Be faithful in daily devotions.

One of the greatest ways we can care for ourselves is by making our spiritual care a No. 1 priority. This should be first on our list.

It should be a priority above everything else.

If our spirit isn't cared for, everything else will be out of order.

If we want a spirit that has a strong foundation of joy and peace, no matter what our circumstance, we need to have a spirit that daily fellowships with Almighty God.

A heart that knows the heart of God.

A heart that is continually leading us back to the mirror of God's Word to see our reflection.

A heart that is daily being nourished with the meat of the Word.

A hearty spiritual meal consists of

- **Daily Bible reading.** I recommend that we read a whole chapter a day, a book at a time. This way we get a complete picture of what God is saying through His Word. Here are some posts about how to read the Bible
- **Prayer.** Start with 10 minutes or so a day and

continually work toward increasing your prayer time. Check out my Bible study, 7 Days to a Better Prayer Life that teaches you how to pray.

- **Bible study.** This is different than Bible reading. Once or twice a week, we should set aside time to take a portion of God's Word to dig deeper into, using resources like a Strong's Concordance, Bible dictionary and insightful commentaries.
- **Bible Memorization.** We should make it a regular habit to memorize God's Word. By memorizing God's Word, we are hiding it deep in our hearts and allowing it to transform our lives.

2. Practice biblical meditation.

The Hebrew word for meditation means to mumble to oneself. We should make it a regular habit to speak God's Word to ourselves, going over it word by word and allowing God to show us how each word applies to our daily lives. This is a process of renewing our minds.

A healthy nourishing diet I'll be honest, a few years ago, I didn't want to hear this. I was too exhausted to think about changing my diet. But what I discovered was, it was my diet that was contributing to my exhaustion.

But before I was able to make this very important change, I had to look deeper than just my diet to discover a hidden reason to why I was so resistant to making the diet changes I knew were necessary for my physical healthy and well-being.

I began to ask myself this very important question, "Do I live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, or am I looking to food to meet a deeper emotional need?"

It was then that I realized that I wasn't looking to food to nourish my body; I was looking to food to medicate my soul.

Instead of looking to God for comfort, I turned to the idol of

food for comfort.

To be free enough to make a radical diet change, I had to address some deeper emotional issues; and once I was free in my soul to make this radical change to my diet, and began switching to cleaner, whole foods and eliminating foods that were causing chronic inflammation in my body, I began to physically feel remarkably better.

This gave me the energy I needed to give to my family in ways I had never been able to give to them before.

My husband and children noticed a radical change in me and my ability to be more active with them as well as more positive and fun.

I have chosen to adopt a ketogenic approach to eating. It's maybe not for everyone, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to a healthy diet. Find what works for you, and then make it a lifestyle.

3. Get enough sleep.

If there is one thing many women struggle with, it is getting enough sleep. Especially moms of little ones. This may be impossible for a season, if you have a newborn, or even toddler, you may be in a phase of life where getting enough sleep just can't be managed.

But when your baby is sleeping through the night again, it is time to get back in the habit of going to be early enough to get a full eight hours of sleep.

Even one night of sleep deprivation can cause damage to our bodies. This study shows that even a single night of lost sleep can induce insulin resistance.

When calculating what time you want to get up, make sure you account for some quiet time with Jesus before the rest of the family wakes, and then count back eight hours and set your

clock.

But there is one more thing that you should do one hour before you go to bed, and that is either turn off all of your screens or use blue blocking glasses.

Here's why.

Our screens prevent our sleep hormones from signaling to our bodies that it's time to go to bed. You can either purchase these great blue blockers, or use a blue light filter app on your device, like this one that I use.

Getting enough sleep allows our bodies to fully detox.

But more than that, in His Word, God prescribed rest. Throughout the Old Testament we see God commanding the Israelites to rest from their labors to worship Him and celebrate Him.

In fact, whenever we see rest in the Bible, it all comes back to God.

True rest happens when our spirits and souls are at rest. When we are in right standing with God, our spirits and souls rest and our bodies don't feel strained.

If you're soul-weary, a trip to the beach, a good book, a Netflix binge or a tub of your favorite ice cream will not help. You need to get on your knees and seek God's face.

Allow His presence to refresh you, and then sleep a peaceful sleep.

4. Leave yourself some margin.

This is one of the biggest struggles in today's society.

Technology that was meant to simplify our lives has in fact lured us into the trap that we can do all of this multi-tasking, making our lives more complicated than ever before.

Add to that the fact that wherever we go, we're available to everyone. Day or night.

Our cell phones have ensured that we never miss a call, text or notification. And for many like me, their cell phones are their office, so they are never truly away from work.

So, whether we're at the park with our kids or home relaxing with our spouse, we're never truly resting because our phone is ringing and pinging, reminding us of people and things we need to attend to.

For some, the ringing and pinging goes on all night.

With two kids in school (one in home school), I'm learning the value of margins for myself. I'm learning to close my laptop and leave it closed. I'm learning to use the "Do Not Disturb" feature on my phone.

Because if Jesus needed to pull away from people, so do we. But here's the most important reason why we need to have margins in our life:

Our society is noisy. So. Very. Noisy.

The TV, radio, internet, social media, blogs, books, cell phones, all of the stuff that is constant vying for our attention is competing with God's voice in our lives.

And we can't hear Him if we don't turn it off.

When we fail to turn off the noise and just sit alone with Him in the silence: no Facebook or Instagram, no Twitter or email, no pinging and ringing, no talking heads telling what to believe and how to think.

With just the Holy Spirit speaking to us through His Word and in prayer, we will begin to feel a rest in our souls as we've never known.

5. Invest in relationship.

This is so intimidating, isn't it?

I mean, most women don't want to admit it, but we're intimidated by one another. We're intimidated by each other's perception of body image, by each other's exercise regimen and diet, by each other's parenting skills and marriage.

Somewhere along the way, we allowed mean girls and the media to turn us from friends into frenemies. From compatriots of our heavenly kingdom to competitors in this fallen world.

And the results are saddening.

Girls, we need relationship. Not only because God created us, females in particular, with a deep need to connect with one another, but also to challenge one another. Iron sharpening iron. So that by being accountable to one another, we learn from one another how to have been character and how to be more Christlike.

Even Paul urged Titus to instruct the older women to encourage the younger women. They needed that relationship, that accountability.

Relationship feeds the soul and nourishes our spirit.

When we choose to submit ourselves to our peers, allowing them to hold us accountable for our spiritual walk, our emotional stability and our physical habits, we are caring for ourselves in a very significant way.

God entrusted us with our bodies—all three parts—and expects us to take responsibility to care for them.

But our motivation for caring for ourselves is just as important as how we care for them. Are we caring for ourselves because we arrogantly assume we deserve it?

Or are we caring for ourselves so that we can continue to go about the Father's business? {eo}

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