

What Holy Spirit Wants You to Know When You're Criticizing Your Body

I love holidays, especially the New Year. It's a time to rededicate, to start anew. For many Christians, it's a time to commit to reading the Bible through during the year. Knowing and understanding Scripture is an excellent thing to do.

Of course, reading the Bible through means actually reading the parts we tend to skim over at times. You know what parts I'm talking about: the genealogies, the instructions for the tabernacle in Exodus, and all the rules and regulations in Leviticus. Woe to those who attempt to honor their Bible-reading commitment at the end of a long day, sitting in anything resembling a comfortable chair!

As I write this, I'm reading, in Exodus, God's directions for setting up the tabernacle. A couple of things popped into my mind. One, of course, is that I should always read in the morning. The other is the care and attention to detail God outlined for the tabernacle. This was essentially a big tent in the desert, a big, movable tent. It struck me that God, the Creator of the universe, would take the time to detail with such specificity how He wanted the tabernacle to be built, even down to what colors to use for the stitching and embroidery work. God envisioned and planned for the tabernacle, His temple, to be built in a very specific way, one that would be functional as well as beautiful.

"Why are we talking about temples?" you may ask. "I just want to lose 50 pounds."

Do you know your body is a temple? First Corinthians. 6:19 says, "What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from

God, and that you are not your own?"

Why are we talking about this? There's your answer—your body is a temple. God cared about the beauty and functionality of the Exodus tabernacle. He left detailed instruction on how it should be built, moved and maintained. He wanted it to become a focal point in the lives of His chosen people, Israel. By placing His presence inside the tabernacle, God granted a formerly enslaved nomadic people the incredible honor and privilege of carrying around His presence and carrying out His will in the world.

So what about your temple, your tabernacle? Do you think God is any less interested in your body? After all, your body is also a receptacle for His Spirit. By placing His presence in your body through the Holy Spirit, God is granting you, with all your faults and imperfections, the incredible honor and privilege of carrying around His presence and carrying out His will in the world. Instead of having one really big tabernacle to house His presence, God has allowed each one of us to act as a beautiful, functional, movable temple for His Spirit.

Please Pass the Guilt

Before you beat yourself up any further for that Cinnabon desecrating God's temple, let's stop for a moment and gather some perspective. Yes, Psalms 139 says God created your body, that He knit it together. Scripture also says God knows even the number of hairs on your head (Matt. 10:30). So God is responsible for the building blocks used to put your body together. You have a unique body given to you by God, ordained by Him even before the moment of conception. If you're unhappy with the way this body He's given you has turned out, God should accept responsibility and fix it, right?

It doesn't work that way. Yet some of us become quite angry with God if the latest diet doesn't work. We're genuinely miffed every time we look in the mirror and see those

irritating imperfections. We think, *Why doesn't God help me change?* Or better yet: *Why doesn't God just change me?* The answer could be that God sees nothing wrong with the way He created you. Your body type may not be the current rage in this world, but that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you. If you try to blame God for the foolish standard of worldly beauty and perfection, you're barking up the wrong tree.

What needs to change is not your body but your perception of your body. Perception is not reality. Your perception may say that your eyes are too narrow and your eyebrows too bushy. The reality is both your eyes and your eyebrows are functioning perfectly well, just as they're constructed to do. The "too" part comes from societal standards and has nothing to do with function and performance. Instead of praising God for the way in which He created your eyes and your eyebrows, you grumble and complain about "too" this and "too" that. Your perception leads to dissatisfaction. In that, you're joining a long line of grumblers and complainers, also known as the people of God who Moses led out of captivity. Mad at God? Get in line.

I'm sure there were Israelites who really didn't like the way the tabernacle was constructed. Maybe they thought the carrying poles should be made of cedar and not acacia wood. Or maybe they thought silver rings were the way to go instead of gold or bronze. Can you imagine God's reaction if someone had argued with Him over His instructions?

Yet don't we do the same thing with God when it comes to our bodies? We're upset about the spacing of our eyes, the angle of our teeth, the length of our noses and the size of our chests, bellies and behinds. If our hair is naturally curly, we pay to have it straightened. If it's straight, we pay to have it curled. If it's brown, we color it or highlight it blonde. Instead of fighting God's design, we need to learn to operate within it, to find all the beauty and functionality He's placed there. Instead of fighting against our own

perceptions, we need to learn to accept our unique reality.
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*This article is an excerpt from The Body God Designed by
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