

Why God Places a Priority on Your Physical Health—and You Should Too

Although I believed I was healthy and fit, by the time I reached my 22nd birthday, my 6-foot-2-inch frame had skyrocketed to 270 pounds, and I was diagnosed with borderline hypoglycemia.

My blood pressure and my cholesterol levels were high; my health was rapidly deteriorating. I was told I might need to take medication for the rest of my life. As a result, I was denied life insurance and was instructed by my physician to “go on a strict diet.” I was shocked. I knew if I didn’t change my life, my life would change me.

The physical health of our body definitely plays a role in our overall health—mentally, emotionally and spiritually—and when we improve it, our overall quality of life improves significantly as well. Taking care of the one body that God has given us is wise stewardship; it affects our entire life. Although spiritual health is first and foremost, our physical health also plays a vital role in productivity. According to many experts, many diseases are preventable through proper nutrition and exercise. To suggest that health should not be a priority is to suggest that God isn’t concerned with this area.

It’s ironic: We have more fitness centers, more personal trainers, more books and more articles written about fitness than ever before, yet health-related illnesses and problems caused from poor nutrition and obesity are increasing at an alarming rate. We pray for healing, but often neglect the primary cause of disease—poor health. It reminds me of the man who prayed, “Lord, please increase my finances—my debt is

killing me,” as he headed to Las Vegas with his weekly check.

Granted, I don't believe that everyone should be healthy and wealthy. We live in a sinful world that often results in disease and sickness. God sometimes uses pain, sickness, and disease to draw us closer to Him; however, we cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater and totally dismiss physical health.

Obesity and poor health zap energy and rob from life. Poor nutrition affects us negatively in several different ways. High levels of caffeine or nicotine, for example, lead to irritation, anger, impatience, anxiety and worry, the exact opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. Many who damage their families through anger are addicted to caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, drugs and more. Clearly, health plays a vital role in our overall attitude. When we feed the body what it needs, it will run better.

I also encourage those suffering with depression and anxiety to look first at their spiritual and physical health. I'm not minimizing depression or anxiety; they are debilitating, but we shouldn't immediately assume we need a prescription without first checking the obvious: Do we have a strong devotional and prayer life? Are we monitoring our thought life and media choices carefully? Are we taking care of our body?

If the answers are no, it's very likely that change needs to take place. Regardless of what the culture promotes, choosing to follow a healthier lifestyle is the first step in making health a priority. It's generally not if poor nutrition causes damage, but when. What a sad commentary on the lifestyle of a nation that has such great potential to live in the blessings God has so graciously given.

Eating healthy is a constant challenge because temptation is always before us. The next time you're tempted, try asking, "Does my body need it—or does it want it?" The purpose of food

is to meet our nutritional needs, not our wants. That bears repeating: food was created to meet our body's needs, not our wants—to heal, restore and replenish.

Many of America's most popular foods have little nutritional value and contain harmful ingredients. Add to this the absence of organic (the way God designed it) fruit and vegetables for fiber and dietary health, and it's obvious why cancer now affects one out of three individuals—we're not feeding the body what it needs to fight cancer, heart disease and poor health in general.

No wonder many experience extremely low energy levels, attention-deficit problems, sleep disorders, anxiety and mood swings, to name only a few. A first step toward better health is to eat God-given, organic foods when possible. I just wished I had followed this plan earlier in my life.

On the flip side, we should avoid being obsessed about health and weight. Many people spend most of their lives trying to look different. They often rate their appearance by society's standard and strive to look like a "perfect 10." This false perception causes many people to remain unfulfilled (even the 10s).

When we compare ourselves to others, we are not using wisdom. You were not designed to be someone else; you were masterfully designed to be you. A perfect physique does not guarantee happiness any more than a good mattress guarantees sleep.

True happiness does not come from outer appearance; it comes from spiritual health—from seeking God with all our heart, mind, body, soul, and strength. Begin here. {eoa}

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