

Do You Respect Yourself!

✘ *By keeping our bodies in tip-top shape we can truly do God's work the way He intended.*

If you suffer from self-doubt or self-hatred, abuse your body with bad food or bad habits, or regularly find yourself at the bottom of the list of people you do things for, then you do not understand your own value.

I believe that many people today are experiencing a self-respect crisis. This condition has to change in order for us to lead effective Christian lives.

I'm talking about striking a balance that allows us to be involved in good works while tending to our own basic needs. Only by keeping our entire being in tip-top condition can we truly do God's work the way He intends. Through much study, prayer and personal experience, I have discovered some keys to enjoying a healthy life now.

One of the most important things I have learned is to let God do the heavy lifting. Jesus said in John 15:5, "'Apart from me you can do nothing'" (NIV). We all try to be self-sufficient, but we need to let God supply the ability to energize our choices. Willpower and determination will get us started, but they've been known to quit in the middle and leave us stranded.

We can learn to enjoy the life Jesus died to give us by inviting God to become involved in every aspect of it. Jesus said, "'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'" ().

We are not made to function without God. Yet with Him we can break the bonds of overeating, substance addiction, poor personal maintenance and other problems we have struggled with.

Some of us haven't learned to love our bodies enough to properly care for them. To change that, we must discover why we are not taking care of ourselves. Only the truth sets us free (see John 8:32). In fact, facing the truth is one of the bravest things we can do.

We simply cannot look great if we don't feel great. How we feel shows up somewhere: in our body language, in the dull look in our eyes and even in our skin tone. It is in our nature to care for ourselves, so why don't we? I came up with several reasons:

1. **We don't know how to care for our bodies.** Bad diets, misinformation, and fast foods have confused people about what a wholesome diet is and how to eat the right foods in proper amounts.
2. **Our view of body image is skewed by media and advertising.** We're bombarded with unattainable ideals of beauty, while obesity is so prevalent that it's almost considered normal. We need to rediscover what a healthy person looks like.
3. **Exercise is nearly obsolete.** We've invented enough conveniences that we often live completely void of exercise. We don't even walk anywhere we don't have to! It turns out a good deal of our well-being is dependent on exercising our bodies.
4. **We're stressed out.** The pressure of juggling careers and parenting has taken a heavy toll on us. Life is a gift to be enjoyed. It should be pleasurable—not chaotic and out of control. It's up to us to set our priorities and live with them.

5. **Some have an unhealthy view of selflessness.** It feels so good to do for others—it makes us feel important. But I often see people who routinely ignore their own basic needs. Everything in life must be balanced.
6. **We have lost our support.** Maintaining a good support network is a terrific way to prevent the formation of bad habits. We need to spend regular time with God and be accountable to others.
7. **We have forgotten our worth.** As I mentioned earlier, if you misunderstand your own importance in God's big plan, taking care of yourself seems pointless. God has a great future for you and you need to be ready for it!
As you set reachable goals for yourself, I encourage you to take small steps, laugh at setbacks, make it convenient and reward yourself. Taking responsibility for you is the focus. To that I say, "Go for it!"

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular *Beauty for Ashes* and *Battlefield of the Mind*, and her most recent, *Look Great, Feel Great* (all Warner Faith). She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. and the host of *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide.