

POSSESSING THE BODY

Virgil Warren, PhD

INTRODUCTION

The body is what we notice first about people.

It is with the body that we act and relate to them: shake hands, smile, talk, hear.

What a person looks like is more than looks: *"Pretty is as pretty does."*

As with all other studies in this series, the proper use of the body is relative to the interpersonal framework. That observation follows primarily because the body is our instrument of action, and sin and goodness are actions. That fact combines with the related observation that sin and goodness (morality) pertain only to actions done in an interpersonal connection.

The body is important, then, because of its potential for good or bad.

THREE ATTITUDES TOWARD BODY AND SPIRIT

<u>body</u>	<u>spirit</u>		
1. evil (The body is the prison house of the soul.)	good	=	Gnosticism
2. amoral (The house is all there is.)	non-existent	=	materialism
3. subordinate (the instrument of activity for good)	dominant	=	Christianity

I. SUBORDINATING BODY TO SPIRIT.

"The body is not the highest frame of reference." Spiritual fruit subordinates body to spirit.

A. Four ways of treating the body

1. Satisfy it (hedonism)

Philippians 3:19: *"whose god is their belly"*

2. Depreciate it (asceticism)

Colossians 2:23: *"severity to the body"*
Deprive, neglect, deny the body

3. Glorify it (humanism)

- a. Wellness: health goods, exercise
- b. Beauty

4. Transcend it (Christianity)

B. Keeping the body out of primary position

- 1. Control the body in terms of higher things: spirit
values
authority of God
mind
- 2. Note the following passages:

1 Corinthians 9:27: *"keep my body in subjection"*

Romans 8:13: *"By the spirit we put to death the deeds of the body."*

Romans 12:1: *"Present the body to God as a living sacrifice"*

Romans 12:2: *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

C. Consequences of not subordinating the body

When we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption in two related ways:

1. Death (dead end)

Everything that <u>is based on</u>	flesh dies with it:	beauty
<u>derives from</u>		athletics
<u>is in the realm of</u>		artistry

2. Deterioration (deaden)

Sowing to the flesh means submitting to the law of diminishing returns.

- a. Satiating the body deadens, self-destructs, enslaves.
- b. Adrenaline example: Overdemand for adrenaline destroys the very body that produces it and its exhilarating experience.

Sowing to the spirit means buying into the law of increasing returns.

II. USING THE BODY AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION AND ACCOMPLISHMENT.

"The body is not an end in itself."

A. Glorify God.

1 Corinthians 6:13, 20; Colossians 2:17: *“the body is for the Lord; glorify God in your body.”*

The body is the temple for the Spirit.

B. Serve other people.

2 Corinthians 4:10-11: *“manifesting the life of Jesus through the body”*

Philippians 1:20: *“Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”*

2 Corinthians 3:3: *“You are an epistle of Christ.”*

C. Accomplish goals.

The body is the vessel of the Spirit.

III. PROVIDING FOR THE BODY IN ACCEPTABLE WAYS.

A. Provide for the body

There is some truth in the three mistreatments of the body, but they carry things to an extreme. Instead of the extremes,

1. Provide for it; do not satiate it.

1 Corinthians 5:29: *“People do not hate their own flesh, but nourish and cherish it.”*

2. Control it; do not deprive it.

Colossians 2:23: *“Severity to the body has little value against indulging the flesh.”*

3. Groom it; do not glorify it.

Exercise, nutrition, rest, and protection result in greater ability to deal with emotions, with stress, with irritability.

B. In acceptable ways

God has not given any bodily desire for which he has not also provided some appropriate manner of satisfying. The desires in themselves are not bad.

1. Hunger is fulfilled by eating, not gluttony.

Note the institutionalized gluttony in ancient Roman feasts.

1 Corinthians 6:12: *“All things are lawful/legal, but not expedient.”*

Paul did not want to be brought under the control of anything.

He did not want to get “hooked.”

1 Corinthians 10:23: *“All things are possible/legal/lawful, but not all things are edifying.”*

2. Thirst is fulfilled by drinking, not drunkenness.

We must retain the ability to be responsible for ourselves.

3. Clothing and shelter needs are fulfilled by modesty, not by extravagance or sensuousness.

1 Timothy 6:8: *“. . .but let us be content with food and clothes.”*

4. Sexual desires are fulfilled within marriage, not in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia, or bestiality.

- a. In marriage where the interpersonal dimension is not lost

1 Corinthians 7:1-5: *“Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife and each woman have her own husband.”*

- b. Sex is a drive and a capacity, not a “deficiency” need.

- c. Uniqueness of sexual sin: 1 Corinthians 6:18

- Beyond
- (1) Sexually transmitted diseases
 - (2) Unwanted pregnancies (without a home for raising the children)
 - (3) Rampant abortion and infanticide (as a way of trying to undo the effects of irresponsible sexual behavior), there is
 - (4) the loss of identity

Sexual intimacy is nearest to our sense of identity.
Aberrations here can be highly destructive of personhood.

- (a) Dehumanizing
- (b) Premarital sexual intimacy can block whole-person intimacy, which should come first.
Without that framework there is the result of feeling manipulated and used.
The interpersonal must precede anything else that is

to be added to persons in relationship, whether authority or sexuality.

Even sexual addiction is possible.

CONCLUSION

Joshua put twelve stones in the River Jordan as a memorial. Our bodies are for identifying with Jesus Christ. They serve as walking memorials of him. Christ's physical body is replaced by ours individually and collectively.

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