

# Spiritual Discipline: Stewardship of Body

November 2015

Our culture encourages us to focus on our comfort, entitlement and self-indulgence. However, the lives of Jesus Followers should declare a very different message. The testimony of our living sacrifices, our whole bodies presented to God as holy and acceptable (Rom. 12:1). God created man in His Image as a bodily being (Gen. 2:7) and declared that it was very good (Gen. 1:31). Christ came in the flesh (John 1:14) and in Him the fullness of God dwelled. All things in heaven and earth have been created by Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:16). Therefore, our bodies have purpose. What we do with and to our bodies either supports or betrays our worship of Christ. We spend much of our brief lives tending to our bodies through sleep, food and physical activity. But in a world of fitness fanatics and diet gurus, how do we reclaim a biblical view of our bodies that bolsters our worship and shows the world that we are stewards of all God has given us?

## Principles of Being a Good Steward of Our Bodies:

1. **Honor God With Sleep:** God created sleep but doesn't need it (Ps. 121:1-4). But our bodies require sleep for survival. We spend one-third of our lives sleeping. Studies show that sleep improves memory, lowers stress, combats disease and increases longevity. However, for a few, the most spiritual thing we can do is surrender our sleep for a season. Whether it's nursing a newborn, battling an illness or warring in prayer, we may voluntarily or by necessity set aside normal sleep patterns. In such seasons, we still submit our bodies to Christ, boasting in our weakness as we call upon God's strength.
2. **Honor God With Food:** God created men and women in His image, blessed them and charged them with filling the earth and subduing it (Gen. 1:28-29). He then made food as a provision for His creatures. He gifted us with fuel to sustain, nourish and energize our bodies for worship and witness. We fuel our bodies for the glory of God and good of others. The Bible reminds us that our freedom is not "to indulge the flesh" but instead to "serve one another humbly in love" (Gal. 5:13, NIV). The Bible reminds us that we are not our own but that we have been bought with a price and are to glorify God in our body (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Yet the Bible also reminds us to eat and drink with enjoyment because these are from God's hand (Eccl. 2:24, 9:7).
3. **Honor God With Exercise:** The fitness of our physical beings is a spiritual exercise, an expression of how we respect what God has created. *This may mean the most spiritual thing we can do is start moving.* Instead of disciplining our body to subdue it (1 Cor. 9:27, 23), we concede to complacency. *This may mean what we need to do is slow down.* We wear our self-discipline with pride, the trophies on our shelves showcase our successes. Our bodies can become vehicles for vanity instead of vehicles for kingdom-building. *And, for a few, this means we need to receive our restraints with thanksgiving.* An illness or injury may inhibit activity, but the charge to glorify God in our bodies remains the same. Yet where functionality fails, we remember that the momentary affliction of our aging bodies points us to "an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17).

The Church must reclaim what the world prizes in good health. Not because we idolize our bodies or fear death, but because we value God's image displayed in our bodies. May we reclaim sleeping, fueling and fitness as spiritual worship.

Throughout the month of November, live out the spiritual discipline of Stewardship of Body by working through the items below and discussing them with your 222 Group.

- Are you honoring God by getting the right amount of sleep?
- Are you eating enough fruits and vegetables and drinking plenty of water each day?
- Will you use your body for the glory of God and good of others, and accept fitness as more than mere exercise?
- Will you commit to move more, eat less, and sleep an appropriate amount?
- Go to [ministrygrid.com](http://ministrygrid.com). In the "Have a Membership Code?" field use the following code: **93CT82**. First time users of Ministry Grid will be asked to create a free profile. View and discuss new insights with your 222 Group.