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Respect Your Body

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Four mornings a week I stumble out of bed at 5:15 and head for the gym. Even after years of this “diversion,” I am still amazed at the range of bodies present there. I see pudgy young adults pumping the pedals of the bikes, elderly gentlemen stepping around the track eyeing their cardiac monitors, a grandmother who works out twice as hard as I do but weighs fifty pounds more, svelte twenty-somethings galloping through step aerobics, an obese twenty-something huffing through the same routine, three muscular guys swimming laps in triathlon training, while a gray-haired women ten feet away does water aerobics with a flotation belt to protect her arthritic knees. Anyone working out before 6:00 a.m. has got to be pretty serious about keeping fit, so I give us all an A for effort. But effort notwithstanding, our bodies wear many shapes. Even so, these shells that house our inner being are a gift from God. We are to respect our bodies and use them for his glory.

GROUP DISCUSSION. If you could change or fix one thing about your body, what would that be?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What do you do to care for your body? How do you misuse or neglect your body? Why?

We sometimes see the Christian faith as dealing with the mind and the soul. But in this passage Paul speaks of something both solid and personal—the body. *Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.*

1. In what different ways throughout this text does Paul show that our bodies are important?

2. What good advice for care of the body might grow out of the statements in verses 12-13?

3. Verse 14 speaks of resurrection, Christ's and ours. Why might belief in the resurrection of the body encourage you to respect your body as it is now?

4. Verse 16 quotes the Genesis creation passage, "The two shall become one flesh." In view of the two verses on either side of this statement, what new significance does Paul bring to that ancient text?

5. What are some ways that you could allow your body to express your relationship with the Lord—that you are "one with him in spirit" (v. 17)?

6. Focus on verses 18-20. Verse 18 says that sexual sins are sins against our own bodies. What harm can come from these sins?

7. Take a moment to meditate on the statement "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit" (v. 19). What feelings, questions or prayers does this bring to mind?

8. Verse 19 says, "You are not your own." How is this statement in conflict with current secular ethics?

9. What practical differences result from these two opposite views of the self? (Contrast practical expressions of current secular ethics with the way we might live out verses 18-20.)

10. In what ways do people show lack of respect for their bodies?

11. Why might a person fail to care for his or her body?

12. How can you show appropriate respect for your body—without becoming preoccupied by it?

Pray, expressing your belonging to Jesus Christ—body and soul.

Now or Later

What do you like and dislike about your body? Talk to God about some of those feelings.

Prayerfully recall your use (and misuse) of your body. If some of these actions are inconsistent with the teachings of the passage you have just studied, confess any sin against your body and ask God's help in leaving that sin. Accept the fact that he is washing away those sins—as if they had never happened.

Focus on this psalm:

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well. (Psalm 139:13-14)

Thank God for the gift of your body. If it seems appropriate, make a personal commitment to God, regarding the use of your body.