

HEALTHY CHRISTIANS - PART 1
Healthy Lifestyles
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Mark 6:30-46
Subject: How Jesus responded to the intense demands that both He and His disciples experienced
Complement: He took time out and encouraged His disciples to do the same.
Exegetical idea: Jesus responded to the intense demands that both he and His disciples experienced by taking time out and encouraging His disciples to do the same.
Homiletical idea: **Jesus wants you to enjoy a healthy, balanced life!**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to review their current lifestyle and allow God to guide them towards a healthy, balanced life.

Introduction

Last weekend was an amazing time of ministry. At our 7:45 AM prayer service, we prayed that God would call people by name and that He would bless everyone who stepped onto the campus that day! And God honored that prayer. We experienced showers of blessing! Three communion services. Three baptisms. A baby dedication. Twelve people added to the church as new members. Five prayer quilts given out. Six powerful testimonies. It was an amazing morning!

I stayed to pray with people after 3rd service. And we continued to sense the showers of blessing. When I looked at my watch, it was 1:30 PM. I had a lunch appointment scheduled with a family, but I realized that I wasn't going to make it. If I left immediately, and drove to their house, I would have to turn around and leave as soon as I got there in order to get back in time for a memorial service scheduled for 2:30PM. So I had to call on my cell phone, apologize and tell my gracious hosts that I would have to take a rain check. So many showers of blessing, there wasn't even time to eat.

Have you ever had a day like that? So busy, there's not even time to eat? Or if you do get your hands on some fast food, there's no time to chew?! It's not easy to maintain a healthy, balanced life, is it? The disciples of Jesus could relate to the challenge I was facing. They also had days when they were so busy they didn't even have time to eat.

Perhaps you remember the story, recorded by the gospel writer Mark. I want us to study that story today, because we see a familiar problem, and an added complication, but we can also find in this story the solution to our problem...how to maintain a healthy, balanced life.

Open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, and we will begin to read from verse 30. "....." Jesus had just sent the Twelve out on their first missionary assignment. We read in Mark 6:7, "....." And Mark 6:12-13 tells us, "....."

What an amazing time of ministry! Showers of blessing! And more showers of blessing. But there was a problem. And Jesus noticed the problem immediately. Let's continue the story in Mark 6:31, "....."

Does that sound familiar? "There were many coming and going and they didn't even have time to eat." The verb that Mark uses here, translated "they didn't have time" is in the imperfect tense. That means that this was an ongoing problem. The disciples were so busy, they were continually challenged to find time to eat.

Does that sound like your schedule? Busy, 24/7. Tough to find balance. And you're not doing bad things. They're all good. But there is so much to do. Too much to do.

The other day, one of our church family was having a chat with his 8 year old son, who is currently in 3rd grade. Dad was hoping that they could have a father and son bike ride the next

day. When he asked his son about the bike ride, he was expecting a quick response: “Great daddy, I can’t wait!” Here the response that he heard from his 3rd grade son: “Daddy, I am completely booked for the week. I have school, then school homework, then reading, then piano practice, Karate class on Monday, basketball practice on Tuesday and Wednesday and Tennis classes on Thursday and Friday. Maybe Sunday afternoon we could make some time for the ride!”

And that young man is only 8. I don’t have to convince you today that we have a problem. Not just a few of us. But many of us, trying to maintain a healthy, balanced life. And when we try to take time out, when we try to “come apart and rest awhile” we face an added complication.

And that added complication isn’t new to us. It’s found in the story that we are studying today in Mark chapter 6. Let’s look again at Mark 6, beginning with verse 30. (30-33) “.....” Do you see the added complication? When we try to find time out from our hectic schedule, our work follows us! The disciples could probably see the huge crowd running around the shoreline of the lake. And the mass of moving needy humanity grew by the minute! So that by the time they got to their deserted place, there was more work waiting for them. Can you relate? When you try to find time out from your hectic schedule, your work follows you.

We not only have the problem of trying to maintain a healthy, balanced life. We have the added complication of our work following us. Our society has developed what seems like a thousand ways for our work to follow us, hasn’t it?

(CELL PHONE RINGS) Oh, excuse me. “Hello. No this isn’t a good time right now. I’m preaching a sermon!....I’m sure that it’s very important....You said that the last time you

called and you kept me on the phone for 30 minutes. So what's so important that you need to call me during the sermon? Your toe hurts? No, I don't know the name of a good podiatrist. No, I don't have problems with my toes hurting. Listen, can I call you back later. I'm preaching a sermon right now. Thanks. Good bye!" (Close cell phone)

That happens all the time.....when we're sitting down for a quiet meal together as a family, when we're walking and praying. Before long, they are going to develop waterproof cell phones that you can take with you into the shower. Work follows you wherever you go!

What's that buzzing? My heart is fibrillating from all of the stress of my unbalanced, unhealthy lifestyle. Oh no, it's just my BlackBerry! Excuse me. I need to check my e-mail. Three messages! Oh, that's just my hourly stock quotes! And there's a great business opportunity in Nigeria, but I have to respond within the next 7 minutes! And there's a message from the same fellow who just called me on the phone. It's marked urgent. He wants me to know that he just found the name of a good podiatrist to look at his hurting toe! No peace!

OK, so where was I in the sermon? Oh, yes. The added complication. You're already struggling with an overloaded schedule. You're trying to find time out so that you can find some balance. And what happens? Just like this story in Mark 6, your work follows you.

Now, Mark 6:34 is a beautiful verse. "....." That's a beautiful picture of our compassionate Savior. But I've heard this verse misused. I've heard this verse used to argue in favor of an unhealthy, unbalanced life, and we justify our intemperance by saying that we're working ourselves to death because we love people! That's a terrible abuse of this text.

There's no where in this story that Jesus tells his disciples that they have to stay with him

the whole day while He is teaching the crowd. He does ask for their assistance later in the day when they come complaining that it's time to send the people home. But nowhere does Jesus expect more of the disciples than is reasonable and balanced and healthy. Listen to this quotation from my favorite book on the life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter Come Rest Awhile. Though Jesus could work miracles, and had empowered His disciples to work miracles, He directed His worn servants to go apart into the country and rest...He did not urge upon His disciples the necessity of ceaseless toil..." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 361

Perhaps Jesus was hoping that His disciples would take some retreat time while He taught. They had been teaching and healing for many days on their missionary journey. They needed some time out. Unfortunately, they didn't seem to take that time. And that's the reason why they had such a bad attitude later in the day!

We could spend a whole sermon on what happened next. The feeding of the 5000 was one of the most remarkable miracles that Jesus performed. But today, I want us to learn from this story how to have a healthy, balanced lifestyle. We've seen the problem...so much to do that there isn't even time to eat. That's an ongoing problem. We've seen the added complication...when you try to take time out, your work follows you. So where's the solution?

The solution is found right here in this same passage of Scripture. Mark 6:45-46. "....." The solution to our problem, the way to find a healthy, balanced life is to go to the mountain, to take time out alone with God. I know that sounds very simplistic. But stay with me. Let me say again, the way to find a healthy balanced life is to go to the mountain, to

take time out alone with God.

But here is the important question. What do we do when we go to the mountain? What do we do during our time out alone with God? Well, what did Jesus do during that prayer time, that communion time with His Father?

Let me suggest at least three components to that mountain retreat time. First, I'm sure that Jesus was strengthened just by being in the presence of His Father. Now I realized that God's presence is always with us. Isn't that right? But sometimes we can be so inundated with the demands of those around us, we don't have time or energy to notice God's presence. Am I speaking the truth this morning? So when you go to the mountain, turn off your cell phone, leave your BlackBerry in another room. Take time just to be in God's presence. Jesus may have prayed praise to God, He may have sung Scripture songs, He may have repeated the words of God given through the prophets. He experienced what the Psalmist wrote about 1000 years earlier when David said, "In Your presence is fulness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

Part of that mountain retreat involved sweet communion with His Father. Another component of that mountain retreat may have been rest, rest in His Father's presence. There are times when we need to simply rest in God's presence. Do you remember when Elijah was exhausted from all of his amazing ministry experiences? In fact, Elijah was so physically and mentally depleted, he was suicidal. And what did the Lord say to Elijah in their communion time together? The Lord sent an angel with this message, "Arise and eat. We'll talk later!" That's a paraphrase, but you get the idea. "Eat and rest some more. We'll talk later!"

Some folks think it's evil to take a nap in God's presence, especially on Sabbath! I don't

think it's evil at all. I think it's a great idea. Now if you're so exhausted that you can't even get up to come to church, if you're so exhausted that you can't stay awake during the church service....now is a good time to nudge the person next to you who's taking a nap!.....if you're that exhausted, you're probably suffering from sleep deprivation. You need to make sure that you're getting adequate rest on a regular basis.

But there's nothing wrong with a nap...after church. And we can take a rest in God's presence. Not falling asleep to resist God. But resting in His presence! Perhaps that was another component of Jesus' mountain retreat time. Sweet communion. Rest. But I believe that there was a third component to that mountain retreat time. There's something else very important that happened on the mountain. Jesus was not only strengthened by sweet communion with His Father, He not only rested, but He also received instruction regarding what God was asking Him to do and what God was not asking Him to do.

In other words, Jesus received wisdom to know when to engage and when to disengage. And that's so important. If you are going to maintain a healthy balanced life, you need to learn when to engage and when to disengage. You need to learn when to say "Yes" and when to say "No."

Look at another occasion when Jesus took time out with His Father. Mark 1:35-37.
"....." I imagine Simon Peter waiting anxiously for Jesus to end His special communion time with His Father. Perhaps Simon Peter cleared his throat, or shuffled his feet. After all, so many people were waiting. And how does Jesus respond? Mark 1:38
"....."

And between that secluded place and the next town, Jesus and his disciples could find

several hours, perhaps even several days of solitude. What was the message that Jesus gave to His disciples following that retreat time with His Father? Time to disengage. Jesus learned when to engage and when to disengage. And if we don't learn that lesson, and where better to learn it than in the presence of our loving Heavenly Father...if we don't learn that lesson, we will burn out and die young.

Jesus wants you to enjoy a healthy, balanced life. We live in a world where our schedules are constantly hitting overload, 24/7/365. And we have the added complication of our work following us wherever we go. The solution is found in by going to the mountain, our time out in communion with God. There we are strengthened, we are energized in sweet communion with our Heavenly Father, there we can rest in perfect peace, and there we can receive wisdom to know when to engage and when to disengage.

There's much more that we will discuss together in this new series on Healthy Christians...healthy finances, healthy relationships, healthy bodies. I hope that you will join us for the whole series. But remember this today: Jesus wants you to enjoy a healthy, balanced life.

I invite you, after your power nap this afternoon, to read again from Mark 6:30-46 and to meditate upon God's Word to you. And if you have a copy of my favorite book on the life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*...read the chapter entitled "Come rest awhile." I have a few copies up here if you would like a complimentary copy. It's chapter 38, Come Rest Awhile.

Is there anyone here today, or listening on the radio or on our website, and you sense the great need for God to help you to find a healthy balance in your life? I want to invite you to raise your hand right where you are...if you sense a need for God to help you to find a healthy balance in your life? Notice, I'm raising my hand too. I want to pray a special blessing for you today.

(CELL PHONE RINGS AGAIN) I'm going to ignore the cell phone. We have something more important to do right now. **(TURN OFF CELL PHONE)**

Let us pray.

Quotes:

“Daddy, I am completely booked for the week. I have school, then school homework, then reading, then piano practice, Karate class on Monday, basketball practice on Tuesday and Wednesday and Tennis classes on Thursday and Friday. Maybe Sunday afternoon we could make some time for the ride!”

“Though Jesus could work miracles, and had empowered His disciples to work miracles, He directed His worn servants to go apart into the country and rest...He did not urge upon His disciples the necessity of ceaseless toil...” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 361

HEALTHY CHRISTIANS - PART 2

Healthy Finances

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Malachi 3:10-12
Subject:	Why God wants us to put Him to the test by being faithful in our tithes and offerings
Complement:	so He can trust us with abundant blessings.
Exegetical idea:	God wants us to put Him to the test by being faithful in our finances so He can trust us with abundant blessings.
Homiletical idea:	God wants to bless you in superabundant ways!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to be faithful in their finances so that they can receive the superabundant blessings of God.

Introduction

Six months ago, Juan Rodriguez had only 78 cents in his checking account and \$50 cash in hand. He had already filed for bankruptcy. He owed \$2200 to the IRS in back taxes and \$42,000 in credit card debt. Today, Juan is a mega-millionaire. How did that happen? He won the \$149 million jackpot in the New York lottery!

So now, all of Juan's financial worries are over. Right? Not necessarily. Did you know that many individuals who win the lottery end up bankrupt just a few years later? People like Suzanne Mullins, who won \$4 million in the Virginia lottery and 11 years later all she had to show for it was a debt of \$154,000? Or Paul Scott Cooney, who won \$20 million in the Florida lottery. Two divorces, five houses, a dozen cars and motorcycles and one failed auto dealership later, Cooney ended up in bankruptcy court with a debt of \$5 million. And those stories of rags to riches, and back to rags are repeated over and over again.

The lesson? If you have unhealthy finances, and someone gives you a pile of money, there's a good chance that you will continue to have unhealthy finances. Does that make sense?

Today, as we continue our series on Healthy Christians, we are going to explore what the Word of God has to tell us about healthy finances. This message is simple, and practical. And I'm praying that it will be a message of hope.

So get your Bible and let's go! I'm going to share with you 5 principles for healthy finances. I'm sure that you could add some more principles to the list. But we are going to list five. And I'm convinced that if you will implement these five principles you will experience superabundant blessings.

I've included a study outline on your bulletin insert so that you can take notes. You may also want to write down some Scripture references.

Principle #1

PUT GOD FIRST IN YOUR FINANCES. Did you get that? Put God where?....FIRST in your finances. James tells us in James 1:17, "Every good and every perfect gift is from above." All that we have is a gift from God. He is our loving Creator and He is our merciful Redeemer. He deserves first place in everything, including our finances. Putting God first in your finances means recognizing that God is the source of all blessings, both temporal and eternal. So how do we put God first in our finances? The wise man Solomon tells us in Proverbs 3:9, "Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of your increase."

We honor God first, not last. We don't wait to see if we have any finances left at the end of the week, or the end of the month. We honor God with our firstfruits.

Did you know that I stopped paying tithe many years ago? I know. You're shocked, right? After all, tithing is clearly taught in Scripture. So why did I stop paying tithe many years ago? Let me explain. I used to pay tithe, give a tenth of my income for the support of the local

ministers and the worldwide ministry of the church. But then I realized that we're not asked to "pay" tithe. Tithe isn't some kind of protection money that we pay to the heavenly mafia to keep us safe. Tithe isn't some kind of investment money that we pay to a heavenly broker hoping for a great return. Tithe isn't paid. Tithe is something we return to God as rightfully His. And He ought to get it first. Not last, if there's enough left over.

If we withhold our tithe, we are robbing God. That's what we read in the writings of the prophet Malachi. Malachi 3:8-10. "....." So God wants us to honor him with our finances, and to honor Him first. With our tithes and offerings.

Our offerings support ministries within the local church. The Bible doesn't tell us what percentage to give in offerings. I can tell you that we need approximately 25% of what you return in tithe to make our budget. But you give as the Lord has blessed you. There's only one request. Give cheerfully. Not grudgingly. Paul tells us in 2 Cor 9:7 that God loves a cheerful giver. Misers are miserable. Givers are cheerful. We give out of gratitude and thanksgiving. And we put God first in our finances.

I was checking our financial reports for the first quarter of 2005. Did you know that our tithe is up 27% for the first quarter, compared to the same period last year? A 27% increase! Isn't that wonderful news? That helps the support of local pastors here at Forest Lake, pastors and evangelists here in the state of Florida, and the worldwide ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist church! And our tithe was up 27%! What do you say?

Now either we all got a 27% pay increase, and we're all returning a faithful tithe.....I don't think so! Or there are new members joining us who are returning a faithful tithe. That's probably true. Or there are members who are being revived and their faithfulness in returning a

tithe and generous offerings is an indication of their spiritual renewal. Maybe it's some of all three. And I say "Praise the Lord!" What about you?

We are also making our church budget for the first quarter of 2005. We are launching many new ministries, and the church is busy seven days a week. That takes faithful support of our local church budget. And God is impressing you to be a part of what He's doing here. Thank you. And may the miracle continue! I'm convinced that the more generously we give, the more abundantly we will be blessed. Listen to the words of the wise man Solomon in Proverbs 11:24-25, "....."

We have a friend in Tennessee who is an inspiration to us. He returns a faithful tithe to God for the support of the ministry. He cheerfully gives a second 10% for church budget. And then he gives a third 10% for mission projects! He is single, and he doesn't have any children. I'm sure that he might have to revise his giving plan if he was married with four children. But whatever he gives, he gives cheerfully. And there is no doubt that he is putting God first in his finances.

Putting God first in our finances is one important principle for healthy finances. Here's principle #2: **SPEND LESS MONEY THAN YOU EARN.**

Did you get that second principle for healthy finances? Spend less money than you earn. Now that sound obvious, but if you forget to apply this principle, you're in trouble. This second principle presupposes that you earn something. You can't have healthy finances if there is no income coming in. The apostle Paul told the believers in Thessalonica, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." 2 Thess 3:10 The wise man Solomon suggests that we can learn a lesson from the ant. In Proverbs 6:6ff, we read, "....."

I was visiting a home improvement store the other day. And when I was checking out, a very friendly and efficient cashier greeted me. As he was bagging my purchases and putting them into my shopping cart, I noticed that only one of his arms was functional. The other arm hung limply by his side. But he didn't complain. He wasn't sitting at home blaming the world for all of his misfortunes. He was out there working, and doing a great job!

We need to earn some income if we are going to have healthy finances....but remember that second principle for healthy finances: SPEND LESS THAN YOU EARN. In other words, you need to monitor your spending. The best way to monitor your spending is a budget. Now some of us have managed without a budget. At least, we haven't counted every penny, and every quarter. We know about how much is available for various categories. But if that isn't working for you, if you find yourself out of money before you're out of month, you need a budget to help monitor your spending. If you'd like help with that, keep listening, stay tuned, we'll give you some help in principle #5. But the goal of principle #2 is simple: Spend less than you earn.

Principle #3: SAVE A PORTION OF YOUR INCREASE.

Remember the illustration of the ant? Not only does the ant work so that there's food to eat for that day. Look back with me at Proverbs 6:8. "....." What does the ant gather food in the harvest? Because winter is coming. We save not just so we can "feel wealthy." We save because there will be future needs for which we must prepare.

Healthy Christians who want to have healthy finances will save a portion of their increase. When I was a young man, someone gave me a cassette tape with a story entitled "The Richest Man in Babylon." I found out later that it was a short story written by George Clason.

Has anyone else ever heard or read *The Richest Man in Babylon*? The simple principles embedded in that story have blessed my life over and over again. In the story, the main character, Banzer, the chariot builder, realizes that if he always spends everything that he earns, he will never make any progress. He is always back to where he started. So he determines to save a portion of his increase. And not just put it under a pillow. But invest that savings.

Unfortunately, it's not enough to save a portion of your increase. You need to save it in the right place. We'll give you some help with that in principle #5. But this Babylonian saves some of his increase, and gives it to a man who is traveling to Tyre. He asks the traveler to buy some precious stones. There's only one problem. The traveler doesn't know the first thing about precious stones. Was that a good place to save money? No! The traveler returns with some worthless rocks, and the Babylonian is back where he started. Well, not quite. He has learned a valuable lesson. A lesson we'll talk about in principle #5.

But principle #3 is crucially important. If you want to have healthy finances, not only should you put God first in your finances, and spend less than you earn, but you should also save a portion of your increase. If you make a good return on your savings, you can treat yourself a little! You can give more away! But save some of the increase and add it to the principal. That's how your savings will grow.

But we must go on to principle #4 for healthy finances. And I feel very strongly about this one. Principle #4: STRIVE TO ELIMINATE DEBT. What did I say? Strive to eliminate debt. We live in a culture that has gone mad. On one day this past week, I got 3 invitations in the mail to open a new credit card. That's how Juan, the fellow who won the New York lottery,

got into trouble. He ended up with \$42,000 worth of credit card debt and 78 cents in his checking account.

Why should healthy Christians who desire to have healthy finances strive to eliminate debt? The wise man Solomon gives us the answer in Proverbs 22:7. “The borrower is servant to the lender.” When you are in debt, you are in bondage. When you are debt free, you are liberated! Unfortunately, there are predators in our culture who strive to snare people in debt. I know that sounds severe, but it’s true. We received 6 credit card applications in the past 2 days. Here’s one example. 0% on your purchases or balance transfers until December 2005. And no annual fee. It sounds too good to be true, doesn’t it? But read the fine print. If you get behind on your payments, the interest rate skyrockets to 16.99, 21.99 or 25.99, depending on your prior history. And help yourself to a cash advance, but the interest charges begin immediately at 22.99%. These special offers are an invitation to bondage.

Now I know that some will argue that some debt is acceptable. For example, school loans are an acceptable debt because they give you earning potential. And I would say, that may be true as long as you have a good academic advisor. Don’t take out school loans to get a degree in general studies, or a degree that isn’t marketable.

Other might say, a home mortgage is acceptable debt. That’s not a consumer item, like a car or furniture which depreciates. A home is an investment, which appreciates. And I would say, “You’re right, if you follow principle #5.” But even with a home, I would still encourage you to implement principle #4 for healthy finances: strive to eliminate debt.

We have some friends who set a goal to be debt free by their mid thirties. They live in a modest house, they drive modest vehicles, they take modest vacations. But they are debt free!

What a blessing. Ask them. Ask anyone who is debt free. It feels healthy!

So how do we get to that place of freedom. How do we strive to eliminate debt? Step one is to make a commitment not to acquire more debt. Practice delayed gratification. If you wait long enough, you may decide that you don't need it. Or you may be able to pay significantly less by paying cash. But make a commitment not to acquire more debt. If that means cutting up your credit cards, do it! You've got to start somewhere.

Secondly, make intentional effort to reduce your debt, paying off the more expensive debt first. Now, I realize that some may argue that if you have 6 debts, and four of them are minor, you might pay those off first, just to get them out of the way. But as a general rule, if you have two debts, one of them is a school loan at 5% and the other is a credit card debt at 12%, you focus on accelerating the payoff of the most expensive debt first. Does that make sense?

Determine to not acquire more debt. Work to pay off your debt, focusing on the most expensive debt first. And thirdly, set a realistic goal for becoming debt free. Perhaps you'll say, "By the time we retire, we want our house paid for." That's a worthwhile goal. So don't sell your house two years before retirement and move up into a mansion that requires all of your equity and then some. Be content with less, if less means being debt free. If you are sitting here this morning, or listening on the radio or the website, and you are buried in consumer debt, I want to remind you that God loves you and you are precious to Him. But he wants you to be healthy, less stressed, more peaceful. And eliminating debt is definitely a stress reducer.

Which brings us to principle #5 for healthy finances. This one is so important. I've been alluding to it through this message. Here is it: **SEEK WISE COUNSEL FROM GODLY MENTORS.** Did you get that? Seek wise counsel from godly mentors. God has been bringing

this word of Scripture to my remembrance all week. Proverbs 19:20. “Listen to counsel, receive instruction that you may be wise in your latter days.”

If you will seek wise counsel from godly mentors, you will be blessed. You will be on your way toward healthy finances. On one occasion, we were considering an investment. We had little experience in this type of investing. So we talked to a godly mentor who had many years of successful experience in this type of investing. Here’s what he told us: “If you don’t buy it, I will!” That was good enough for us. We knew that our friend loved the Lord, he was a man of wisdom which was evidenced by his past decisions. His wise counsel was a blessing.

Do you have someone like that in your life? Someone who can give you wise counsel regarding financial decisions? We have started a special ministry here at Forest Lake Church that is based on a seminar by Crown Ministries, founded by Larry Burkett. One of these finance seminars just concluded this past weekend and I’ve heard that many were blessed by the wise counsel that they received. I’ve asked one of the participants in that finance seminar to share with us today.

Invite Susan (or Tom) to share.

Thanks for sharing with us today. That seminar sounds really helpful. And I understand that we’ll be offering more of those seminars in the weeks to come. And here’s the action step: If you want to enjoy healthy finances, take advantage of this free seminar. You’ll not only gain some wise counsel, but you’ll make new friends! And for those of you who have healthy finances, and may even have special gifts in financial management, you may want to offer to become a mentor, or even to participate in the next seminar as a leader in training. If that’s you, get in touch with Tom Crowl, or with one of the pastors and say those 3 wonderful words: “I can

help!”

God wants to bless us all in superabundant ways. But He wants us to have a healthy approach to finances so that He can trust you with superabundant blessings. Make a commitment as a Christian that you want to have healthy finances. Make a commitment to put God first with your tithe and offerings. Determine to spend less than you earn. Save a portion of your increase. Strive to eliminate debt. And seek wise counsel from godly mentors. Healthy finances aren't the only goal in life. But healthy finances are one part of being healthy Christians! And with healthy finances, you'll be able to give more, and to serve as a godly mentor to others who want to be healthy too. God wants us all to prosper and be in health, even as our souls prosper!

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTHY FINANCES

1. Put God first in your finances.
2. Spend less than you earn.
3. Save a portion of your increase.
4. Strive to eliminate all debt.
5. Seek wise counsel from godly mentors.

HEALTHY CHRISTIANS - PART 3
Healthy Relationships
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: John 13:34-35
Subject: What unconditional love for one another as Christ has loved us demonstrates to the world
Complement: that we are His disciples
Exegetical idea: Unconditional love for one another as Christ has loved us demonstrates to the world that we are His disciples.
Homiletical idea: Love others as Jesus loves you.
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to ask God to fill them with His unconditional love so that they can love others unconditionally as His disciples.

Introduction

We are surrounded by unhealthy relationships. This handsome young man, Scott Peterson, was found guilty of killing his wife and unborn child. These two little boys, Alex and Derek, were found guilty of killing the father with a baseball bat. This young mother, Andrea, admitting to drowning her five children in the bathtub. And then there's this fellow, (Michael Jackson), and whatever he did or didn't do, he is certainly not the model of healthy relationships.

We are surrounded by unhealthy relationships. And not just out there. Reported on the media. We have unhealthy relationships in our own lives, within our own families. Between husbands and wives. Parents and children. Work associates and neighbors.

We are surrounded by unhealthy relationships. But in the midst of those unhealthy relationships, God wants you and me to enjoy healthy relationships. Do you believe that? As healthy Christians, as healthy followers of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, God wants us to experience healthy relationships.

The secret for healthy relationships is found is a portion of Scripture that we will consider

this morning. A command that Jesus gave to His disciples and also to us. We are going to examine that command of Jesus today, and then consider what it would look like in real life.

The portion of Scripture that we are going to study today is recorded in the Gospel of John. These are the words of Jesus to His disciples, and also to us. And if we are to be healthy Christians who enjoy healthy relationships, we must not only hear these words of Jesus, but we must also live these words day by day.

Jesus is speaking to His disciples in the Upper Room. He has just instituted the Lord's Supper, and will soon be taken by an angry mob, put through the mockery of a trial, flogged, and nailed to a cross. But before leaving the Upper Room, Jesus turns to His disciples and says, "A new commandment I give to you..." Does anyone know what that new commandment was? The words of Jesus are recorded in John 13:34. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have love you, that you also love one another."

Some students of Scripture have suggested that this isn't a new command at all! Some suggest that this is just a restatement of a command given over 1400 years earlier through the prophet Moses. Hadn't the Lord instructed Moses, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"? Lev 19:18.

So is this really a new commandment? The answer is "YES"! This command of Jesus to His disciples IS a new commandment...not just because Jesus says so, but because of WHAT Jesus said. Let's read it again. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have love you, that you also love one another."

The love that is spoken of here is agape love. This is the highest form of love. Agape love is selfless love. Self-sacrificing love. No one had ever demonstrated the unconditional love

of God so completely before. But Jesus fully revealed the perfect agape love of God. God is love, the apostle John tells us. And Jesus could say, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” Jesus was a perfect reflection of God’s unconditional love. And He said to His disciples, and also to us today, I want you to love each other unconditionally, just as I have loved you.

In fact, unconditional love is the sign that we are indeed disciples of Jesus. Listen to the words of Jesus in John 13:35. Having just said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have love you, that you also love one another,” Jesus continues by saying, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have agape love for one another.”

So what does unconditional love look like? Well let’s look at two case studies from the life of Jesus. Two case studies of how Jesus loved His disciples.

Jesus’ relationship with His disciple John demonstrates that when we have unconditional love, we love people in spite of their short-comings. John describes himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” And there is no doubt that Jesus did love John....unconditionally. But John was far from perfect. John had many short-comings. Let me name just two. John had a bad temper. He had a short fuse. He was a hot head. However you want to say it, John had a personality defect. On one occasion when a Samaritan village did not welcome Jesus, John and his brother James said to Jesus, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” Luke 9:54

Now maybe these disciples knew something that I don’t know, but as I read the story of Elijah, he prayed for fire to come down and consume the sacrifice, not the people! John has a personality defect. He has a short-coming...he has a bad temper. And Scripture says that Jesus

rebuked John and his brother and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” Luke 9:55-56

And that wasn’t John’s only short-coming. On another occasion, according to Mark, John and his brother James asked Jesus if they could sit one on the right hand and one of the left hand in glory. I’d say that was a bit conceited. What do you think? Scripture records that the other disciples were “greatly displeased”, but maybe because they wished that they had asked first.

John, along with his brother, and the other disciples, had many short-comings. And yet Jesus loved them unconditionally. And He said, ““A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have love you, that you also love one another.”

In his book, *The Ten Commandments of Marriage*, Ed Young shares an example of unconditional love, of loving a person in spite of his short-comings. Apparently, a much loved grandmother was celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary. One of her daughters asked her, “Mama, what is the key to the happiness and joy that you and Daddy have known through the years?” “Well,” she began, “when your daddy and I first got married, I made a list of ten things I would overlook about his personality—things I just didn’t like. I made a promise that when any of those ten things came up, I would overlook it for the sake of marital harmony.”

“Granny,” one of her granddaughters excitedly replied, “please tell us that list. Tell us what those 10 things were!” I imagine Grandpa bowing his head and bracing himself for a list of his major short-comings! And then Grandma replied, “Well, honey, to be honest, I never did write them down. But every time your grandfather would do something to make me hopping mad, I would think, “Lucky for him it’s one of those ten things!”

Grandma was modeling unconditional love, wasn't she? She was following the command of Jesus to love others as Jesus loved her. Just like Jesus, Grandma was loving Grandpa in spite of his short-comings. And as a result, she had enjoyed 50 years of healthy marriage relationship.

So what does loving unconditionally mean? It means loving people in spite of their short-comings. But that's not all. Loving unconditionally also means loving people in spite of their failures. Consider Jesus' relationship with Simon Peter. Simon Peter was always opening his mouth, and all too often he was putting his foot in it. He would have done well to pray with the Psalmist, "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips."
Psalm 141:3

His worst failure happened on the night when Jesus was betrayed. You remember the story. Judas came and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Jesus didn't have to go with that mob. He could have called ten thousand angels to come to His aid. But He loved us so much that He willingly laid down His life. He said, "I will lay down my life, and I will take it up again."

And in the midst of a mockery of a trial, in the midst of physical and emotional abuse, Jesus suffered the worst injury of all. One of His own disciples publically denounced Him and said that he didn't even know Jesus. We can read the account in Matthew 26:69-75.

"....."

Judas had also denounced Jesus, and Judas went out and hanged himself. And it would seem that Peter might do the same. But later we find Peter in the Upper Room. The apostle Paul tells us that Jesus appeared to Simon Peter before He appeared to the rest of the disciples. And John records that Jesus reaffirmed Peter's call to be a disciple by the sea of Galilee.

Why didn't Peter end his life in despair, like Judas? Apparently, he caught a glimpse of the unconditional love of Jesus. And that unconditional love, that agape love, gave him hope. In my favorite book in the life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*, we read these words about those agonizing moments following Peter's denial of Jesus: "Since the death of Christ, Peter had been bowed down with remorse. His shameful denial of the Lord, and the Saviour's look of love and anguish, were ever before him. Of all the disciples he had suffered most bitterly." DA 793

Simon Peter experienced first hand the unconditional love of Jesus. He discovered that unconditional love continues in spite of our short-comings. And unconditional love continues in spite of our failures.

Years ago, over 30 years ago in fact, a song became a #1 hit on popular radio stations. It was entitled "Tie a yellow ribbon round the ole oak tree." Does anyone here remember that song? Why did it become a #1 hit just a few weeks after being released? It was a pleasant tune. It was easy to remember. But more than anything, it was a touching story about unconditional love. A story about loving someone in spite of his failures. According to the song, a husband was on his way home after 3 years in prison. He had written to ask his wife if she would forgive him and welcome him home. Do you remember the sign that she was supposed to give to show that she still loved him in spite of his failure? That's right. She was supposed to tie a yellow ribbon round the ole oak tree! According to the lyrics of the song, the ex-prisoner was taking a bus toward home, and he told the bus driver to slow down as he passed the old homestead. He explained to the bus driver that he was looking for a yellow ribbon. If it wasn't there, he would just "stay on the bus, forget about us, put the blame on me." Remember the words?! By this point, everyone on the bus is looking for the yellow ribbon! And what do they see as the turn the

corner? A hundred yellow ribbons round the ole oak tree! Some folklore historians say that the song was based on an old civil war tale. And perhaps that's true. But we all know that the story has repeated over and over again...sometimes with yellow ribbons, and sometimes without them. People have chosen to love as Jesus loves, to love unconditionally, to love others in spite of their failures.

You say to me, "Pastor Derek, I know that Jesus loved people unconditionally. He loved people in spite of their short-comings. He loved people in spite of their failures. But I can't love like that!" And you're right. You can't love like that. And neither can I. Such unconditional love is a gift from God. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul, recorded in Romans 5:5. "The love of God, the agape love of God, the unconditional love of God, has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

And do you know what happens when we given God permission to fill our hearts with His unconditional love, by the Holy Spirit? Do you know what happens? We experience joy! When we love people unconditionally, when we love people in spite of their short-comings, when we love people in spite of their failures, we experience joy! Listen to the words of Jesus, recorded in John 15:9-11. "As the Father loved, Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love." Verse 11: "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full."

Why are we filled with joy? Because we are reflecting the beautiful character of our loving Jesus. We are reflecting the beautiful character of our loving heavenly Father. We are loving others as Jesus has loved us.

This is the secret of healthy relationships. This is the identifying characteristic of healthy

Christians...they love unconditionally.

Do you have someone in your life who has demonstrated the unconditional love of God? Perhaps a parent, or a teacher, or a dear friend? Someone who has modeled healthy relationships, where people love unconditionally. If you have been blessed by such a relationship, I want to give you an assignment today. Take one of the yellow affirmation and appreciation cards in front of you, and write a note to that person. Perhaps she is sitting next to you. Perhaps he is at home, unable to come to church. Perhaps she lives in a far away city. Take time to write a note of affirmation. Say “Thank you” for that unconditional love.

If that person is here this morning, or lives here in the area, I want you to come up at the close of the service and get a flower to give to him, to give to her. Don’t wait until a funeral to give flowers. Give them now. Give them today. Say “Thank you” for the gift of unconditional love.

And if you’re sitting here this morning thinking, “I don’t have anyone like that. I don’t have anyone who has loved me unconditionally.” I want to remind you that there is One who loves you unconditionally. The same One who calls you to healthy relationships where you love others as He has loved you. Jesus loves you unconditionally. And He reflects our Heavenly Father’s unconditional love. If that’s you today, I want to invite you to write a yellow card to Jesus, and thank Him for His unconditional love for you. And then after the service, come up and get a flower to remind yourself that Jesus loves you unconditionally.

And let us go from this place committed to experiencing healthy relationships, where we love others as Jesus loves us, healthy relationships where we love each other unconditionally.

HEALTHY CHRISTIANS - PART 4

Healthy Bodies

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: 1 Cor 6:19-20
Subject: How we should live since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price
Complements: we should glorify God in our bodies.
Exegetical idea: Since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price, we should glorify God in our bodies.
Homiletical idea: **Honor God with your body.**
Purpose: To challenge my hearers to glorify God by caring for their body temples, abstaining from that which is harmful and participating in that which is good.

Introduction

Do you honor God with your body? No, I haven't been checking your grocery cart! Or evaluating your exercise program, or lack of it! And I didn't see you fall asleep in church last week! But I still want to ask the same question. Do you honor God with your body? Some people in our throw-away culture treat their bodies like cheap disposable containers to be used, abused, and then discarded. What about you? How do you treat your body?

We're continuing our series on Healthy Christians. We've been talking about healthy lifestyles, healthy finances, healthy relationships. You can listen to any of those messages on our website at www.forestlakechurch.org. Today, we're talking about healthy bodies..and more specifically, honoring God with our bodies.

The apostle Paul challenges the Christians in Corinth to honor God with their bodies. And the Word of God challenges us to do the same. We can read Paul's counsel in 1 Cor 6:19-20. I'm reading from the NIV. "....."

The believers in Corinth were facing some very specific challenges. One of their greatest challenges was to avoid the sexual immorality that was rampant in their city. In this famous Greek city, promiscuity was not only prevalent, it was encouraged, endorsed, recommended. A prominent religious gathering place in the city of Corinth was the pagan temple of Aphrodite. Here, cult prostitutes were available so that sexual immorality could be practiced as an act of worship. As you can imagine, the reputation of Corinth spread far and wide.

And the moral pollution had not only affected the secular culture, but the Christian community in Corinth was also affected. A careful reading of First Corinthians makes that abundantly clear. But it wasn't only in the area of sexual conduct that the Apostle Paul challenged the Corinthian believers to honor God with their bodies. A little farther on in the same letter, we read in 1 Cor 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Do all to the honor of God. In other words, honor God with your body no matter what activity you're involved in.

Honoring God with your body means actively caring for your body so that you can experience the best possible health in the imperfect situation in which we find ourselves. We may still deal with sickness and infirmity. But we actively care for our bodies so that we can experience the best possible health in the imperfect situation in which we find ourselves.

So, how do we do that? There are some natural laws of health that have been an important part of what many Adventists call "our health message." Several acronyms have been developed to help people remember these natural laws of health. I remember them by the acronym NEW START. So let's review these natural laws of health together as we continue our journey as healthy Christians.

The N in NEWSTART stands for nutrition. Not any kind of nutrition, but wholesome, balanced nutrition. The way some of us eat, it's a wonder that we are still alive! I was standing in a college cafeteria line some years ago. Around me was a plenty supply of fruits and vegetables. There was a delicious salad bar only feet away from where I was standing. Behind me was a young college student. He had a Kudos, some cookies and a soda. I made some comment about the need for good nutrition and he replied, "Oh I'll be OK, I had fruit loops for breakfast!" I bit my tongue. He wasn't listening anyway. But I ask you, does that kind of diet honor God?

So what is the ideal in terms of good nutrition? In one sentence—get the healthiest diet that is available. If you're interested in an excellent resource to help you with good nutrition and the other natural laws of health, I would recommend this book by Neil Nedley, *Proof Positive*. Dr. Nedley is a graduate of Loma Linda School of Medecine. You'll discover that the original diet in Eden was a pure vegetarian diet. Adam didn't have to run around clubbing the newly named animals in order to eat lunch. We can read about his original diet in Gen 1:29. "....." In some countries of the world, it's easy to eat a balanced vegetarian diet of fresh fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables. You can go to the market or to the grocery store and with the money that you have available you can find everything that you need to enjoy a healthy and balanced vegetarian diet. In other countries, it's virtually impossible. When I was in college at Newbold College in England, I had a friend from Iceland who paid 5 times the amount for a lettuce back home than I had to pay at my home in Brighton, England. He couldn't possibly afford a huge fresh salad and lots of fresh fruit every day. So what did he eat? Fish. The freshest, healthiest fish he could find. Caught fresh every day from the ocean. Was God more pleased with me than

with my friend because I was able to eat a pure vegetarian diet? Of course not. So what's the principle? Honor God with your body by eating the healthiest diet that is available. If you live in an environment where you need to eat meat, eat the healthiest, freshest meat that is available. Don't eat the scavengers and the garbage collectors. Educate yourself about the healthiest diet that is available to you. Honor God with your body by getting the best balanced nutrition that you can. That's one natural law for better health. That's one way to honor God with your body.

The E in newstart stands for..... exercise. Now in some occupations, you don't need to schedule exercise time. If you work on a farm, or in a job that involves hard physical labor you may not need to schedule extra exercise.

Yesterday, we had some new carpet put in our house. So on Thursday, which is my day off, I spent the entire day emptying the contents of 6 rooms. Needless to say, I didn't need to head over to the gym after supper! I'd been working out all day and I was exhausted!

Unfortunately, or fortunately, most of my days aren't like that. Many of us live more sedentary lifestyles. We get worn out by the stress of the day, but we don't get much strenuous exercise at work. Am I telling the truth? If you're part of that group, you need to schedule some exercise time. Get a brisk walk. Go for a jog, hopefully out in a natural setting where you can enjoy God's beautiful creation. Take a swim. Extended cardiovascular exercise is important for all of us. Don't view it as a chore. Don't regard it as a pill to swallow. Consider exercise a privilege. You are taking care of the body that God has given you. Why? Because you want to honor God with your body. Getting regular exercise is another way that you can honor God with your body.

The W in NEW START stands for water. Water on the inside and water on the outside.

What a blessing to live in a country that has an abundance of fresh water. And even if you don't want to drink the tap water, you can buy distilled water for 67cents a gallon!

When Bodil and I led a mission trip to Kenya, we had to filter all of our water. Most of the local people got water from the river. They also did their laundry in the river. And other things in the river. And a bottle of water cost the equivalent of a day's wages for a laborer. How would you like to pay \$40-50 for a bottle of water! I came home deeply grateful for an abundance of clean drinking water.

And yet many of us don't take advantage of that tremendous blessing. How much water do we need to drink each day? Does anyone know the answer to that question? 6-8 glasses a day. Minimum. Is there a formula based on your body size? I've heard the recommendation of ½ ounce for every pound of body weight. Some of us need to drink a lot more water! You can weigh yourself and do the math. Chances are, you'll discover that your body needs more pure, fresh water. How many people listening this today regularly drink 6-8 glasses of fresh water? We're not talking about beverages that include water. Just pure water. How many of you make an effort to drink a minimum of 6-8 glasses of pure water every day? Good for you. My wife often reminds me to drink more water. Sometimes I become so busy during the day, that I forget to drink a healthy amount of water.

And then there's water on the outside. Taking regular showers or baths, staying clean and fresh is more than just a good social practice. It's a responsible way of caring for our bodies. It's a way that we honor God our creator. So water on the inside and on the outside is good for your health. That's another natural law for better health.

The S in NEWSTART stands for sunlight. That doesn't mean that you need to cover

yourself in coconut oil and lay outside in the blazing sun until you are fried to a crisp. In fact, my good friend, Dr. John Chung, a dermatologist in Dalton, GA, encourages his patients to wear sunscreen whenever they expose their skin to direct sunlight in order to protect themselves against skin cancers. So we're not talking about burning your skin under the blazing sun. But plenty of sunlight is good for your health. Don't spend all of your time in a dimly lit dungeon. Open up your mini-blinds, pull back your curtains, and let the sunshine flood into your homes.

I've met people who get really depressed if they don't have enough sunlight. Do you know anyone like that? But the truth is, we all benefit from an abundance of light. It's good for your disposition. It's good for your health.

The first T in NEWSTART stands for temperance, that means partaking in moderation of that which is good and abstaining from that which is harmful. Nutritious food, for example, is good. But too much nutritious food....is intemperate. A few nuts may be part of a healthy diet. But eating a whole can of nuts while you impersonate a couch potato is bad for your health. Exercise is good, but too much exercise can deplete your life forces or lead to debilitating injuries. Water is good, but too much water could drown you or make you look like a prune. Sunlight is good, but too much sunlight could blind you or give you skin cancer. Do you get the point? We need to be temperate, partaking in moderation of that which is good.

Temperance also means abstaining from that which is harmful. Some people feel their body like this pot. They say, "This is my body and I can treat it however I want to." I can abuse it if I want to." Even some Christians have that attitude. After all, they say, "I'll get a new body when the Lord returns." But your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And the Word of God says that we should not destroy this temple. So abstaining from anything that will harm your

body is temperance, and that's a natural law for better health.

The A in NEWSTART stands for air, fresh air, and lots of it.. In some parts of the country, fresh air is hard to find. When our family lived in southern California, we were taking a walk one morning and we saw a dark blanket ofsomething, laying heavy in the valley. I was so thankful to live at an elevation of 3000' above sea level! Some cities of the world have pollution alerts, warning people not to go outside and breath the air. If you're blessed to live in a place where the air is clean, open up your windows, open up your lungs and take some deep breaths. Proper breathing is essential for good health. Don't stay in a stuffy environment when you can get outside and enjoy wonderful fresh air. Plenty of fresh air promotes good health. It's part of honoring God with your body.

And the R in NEWSTART stands for..... Rest. I was reading a recent study about sleep deprivation and the findings suggested that most people need 7-8 hours of sleep per night. I know, some of you might think that's impossible. You don't have 7-8 hours to spare. But is it possible that you would get more done, you'd be more productive during your waking hours if you got an adequate amount of refreshing sleep? Of course, you can get too much sleep. Listen to Solomon's counsel in Proverbs 6:9-11. "....." It doesn't bring honor to God to sleep your whole life away. We need to be involved in productive activity, using that health and strength that God has blessed us with.

And whatever we do, that final T in NEWSTART is important: Trust in God. A trusting relationship with our Creator is vital to enjoying fullness of health. The Bible teaches that we are wholistic beings. The physical and the spiritual and inextricably linked together. You can't enjoy fullness of health if you are spiritually sick. A trusting relationship with God is vitally

important and gives God the honor that is due only to Him.

Following those natural laws of health are a positive response to Paul's admonition in 1 Cor 6:20 where he says, "Honor God with your body."

At this point, someone might be thinking, "Why are you making such a big deal about caring for our bodies? Doesn't the Bible teach that we will receive new bodies when Jesus Christ returns in glory? Didn't I read somewhere that this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality?" You're absolutely right. These bodies that we have are marred by sin and are subject to decay and death. When Jesus Christ returns, those who are raised from the dead will be given glorified bodies, just like Jesus when He was raised from the dead. And those Christians who are living when Christ returns in glory will receive glorified bodies. We can read about that glorious day in Paul's same letter to the Christians at Corinth. 1 Cor 15:51-55. "....."

So, if we are going to receive glorified bodies when Jesus Christ returns in glory, why should we be concerned about caring for these mortal, corruptible bodies? Why worry about honoring God with our bodies? Isn't it enough to simply believe in Jesus? The apostle Paul gives us the answer. Again, in the same letter, in 1 Cor 3:16-17. Notice what Paul tells us: "....."

What's the answer? Why should we honor God with our bodies? Why should we avoid harmful substances and activities? Why should we care for our bodies by positive health practices? The answer? Because our bodies are the temple of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. Do you remember the promise of Jesus given in the Upper Room? It's recorded in John 14:15-17. "....."

That's why, as followers of Jesus Christ, we want to care for our bodies. That's the reason why we want to honor our Creator by way we care for our bodies. Because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We don't want to damage that body temple. We don't want to deface that body temple. When Jesus Christ is your Savior and Lord, you will want to honor God with our bodies. Whether you are running a 3 hr marathon or running a 3 minute errand, honor God with your body. Whether you are preparing for a national examination or preparing lunch, honor God with your body. Whether you are watching TV or watching your calories, honor God with your body. Whether you are in the midst of a celebration or in the midst of a chemotherapy treatment, honor God with your body.

How are you caring for your body temple? (use visual aid of clay pot) Are you using and abusing it? How about a few sleepless nights? How are you caring for your body temple? Are you damaging and defacing it? What about those harmful substances and practices that steal your health and sap your strength? How are you caring for your body temple? Do you recognize that even these mortal, corruptible bodies of ours are very precious to God? We were bought with a price. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. That makes us very precious. Even now. The glorified bodies are soon to come, when our Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. But until then, let's care for our body temples. They are the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. Let us honor God with our bodies.

Does anyone recognize the individual in this picture? He was born of missionary parents in the north of China. He grew up with a deep desire to honor God with his body. This young man had a special gift. He put it this way: "God made me fast, and when I run I feel His

pleasure.” While still in his teens, Eric acquired the nickname of the flying Scotsman. By the time of the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, Eric Liddell held the British record for the 100 yard dash, a record that would stand for the next 35 years. He was expected to come home with the gold medal. But Eric discovered that the heats for the 100 meters would be held on his Sabbath. And honoring God with his body was more important to Eric Liddell than winning a medal. He did compete in the 200 meters event and earned a bronze medal. But something truly amazing happened in the 1/4 mile final. Eric Liddell had barely qualified in the heats that led up to the final of the 400 meters event. Before the race, Eric shook hands with all of the contestants. Then, when the starting gun sounded, he sprang into action. His running style was unorthodox. Arms thrashing. Head bobbing and tilted toward heaven. Feet rising high from the ground. He was once asked how he knew where the finish line was located and he answered, “The Lord guides me.” He wasn’t running for Eric Liddell. He wasn’t running for Scotland. He wasn’t running for Great Britain. He was running to honor God. He was honoring God with his body. And so I supposed it’s really unimportant where he finished in the race. What was truly important was this: Eric Liddell honored God with his body. But in case you are interested, Eric finished 5 yards ahead of the silver medalist, setting a new Olympic and world record. And Eric Liddell’s life of honoring God didn’t end there. The next year he returned to China and served as a missionary until his death in a Japanese internment camp in 1945, just a few days before his 43 birthday.

Eric has been an inspiration to me. At different times and in different ways, Eric sought to honor God with his body. And the Word of God challenges each one of us to do the same: Honor God with your body. Not to make a name for yourself, but to honor your Creator, who

redeemed you at an infinite cost by sending Jesus Christ to die for your sins, and who honors you by making your bodies the temple of His Holy Spirit.

I have a very specific challenge this morning for the young people of our church family. Some of you may realize that you need to make a definite commitment to honor God with your body. You realize that you need to make a definite commitment to abstain from those substances and practices that will damage and destroy your body which is the temple of God's Spirit. I want to invite you to make that commitment today. Honor God with your body. Some of you may be convicted today that things need to change in your life. Damaging practices need to be abandoned. New healthful practices need to be adopted. Make that decision today. Honor God with your body.

If you are convicted today to make that definite commitment, to recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, including your body temple, and that you want to honor God with your body, I want to challenge you to affirm that commitment by coming up to the front of the church and getting one of these small clay pots. I want invite you to let this small clay pot be a symbol of your commitment to honor God with your body. You're rejecting the idea that you can just use and abuse your body temple like a cheap disposable container. You are recognizing that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, purchased at an infinite cost by the death of Jesus Christ our Lord. And every time you look at this little clay pot, whether you place it in your bedroom or in your office or in your kitchen or in your classroom, remember your commitment today: Honor God with your body.

HEALTHY CHRISTIANS - PART 5

Healthy Minds

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Rom 12:2-3
Subject: How the apostle Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to live
Complements: not conformed to the world
But transformed by the renewing of their minds
Exegetical idea: The apostle Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to not be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.
Homiletical idea: **God wants to transform your mind.**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to give God permission to renew their minds so that they can experience radical transformation.

Introduction

Have you noticed how hard it is for some people to live a healthy Christian life? You say, “Have I noticed that some people find it hard...? I find it hard to live a healthy Christian life! We know all about healthy lifestyles...learning from the example of Jesus to go to the mountain, commune with God, receive wisdom to know when to say YES and when to say NO. We know about healthy finances, putting God first, listening to wise counsel from godly mentors. We know about healthy relationships, asking to be filled with the agape love of God so we can love as Jesus loves, in spite of shortcomings, in spite of failures. We know about healthy bodies, following natural health laws, honoring God with our bodies because we have been redeemed at a great price and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We know all of these things. So why is it so difficult to live what we know? Why is it so difficult to live a healthy Christian life?

The answer is found in our minds. That’s where transformation begins, by the grace of God. And today, as we conclude our series on healthy Christians, we want to talk about healthy

minds, and how you can experience ongoing, radical transformation.

The apostle Paul speaks about transformation in his letter to the Christians in Rome. In the first half of his letter, Paul declares that we are all sinners. There is none that is righteousness, no not one. And Paul tells us that the wages of sin is...death. That's the bad news. But the good news, the Gospel message is this: the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord! We can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah. That is good news indeed.

And there, beginning in Romans chapter 12, the apostle Paul gives some practical application. He talks about how to live in the light of the wonderful salvation that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. I invite you to open your Bible with me to Romans 12:1ff.
“.....”

Paul says, Present yourselves as a living sacrifice. That's better by far than a dead sacrifice. And remember that he's not talking about HOW to be saved, but rather our response to the wonderful salvation that is ours in Christ Jesus. And then Paul gets very practical. He tells us what not to do, and what to do.

First, what not to do. Notice his words in Romans 12:2. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.” Don't live like the world lives. Can that happen, even after we become Christians? Absolutely. It usually doesn't happen all at once. It's a creeping compromise. So slowly you hardly notice. And the conformity happens because your attention is focused on the things of this world.

Advertisers understand that if they can get your attention, they can change your behavior. Whatever gets your attention, gets you. That's why companies spend millions of dollars creating

brand awareness, bombarding you with pictures of their products. If they can get your attention, they can get you.

When I was 21 years old, I learned the hard way that whatever gets your attention, gets you. I'd just finished my undergraduate studies at Newbold College in England, and I came over to the United States to go snow skiing with my gorgeous American girlfriend (now my wife of 24 years) and her family. They whisked me off to icy New England, and before I could imitate Eugene Meltzner and cry "assistance", I was standing on top of a snow covered mountain. The view was spectacular, as long as you didn't look down the mountain! Now, I'd never skied before, but I didn't want to embarrass myself in front of my girlfriend. You understand what I'm talking about, don't you, men? After all, I did know the basics about snow skiing: stay upright, don't cross your skies, and don't kill yourself! But that was about it. Bodil went first. I thought it might help to at least see someone who knew what she was doing. Then I began to slide down the mountain. After a few seconds, a wave of terror swept over me. I was picking up speed at an alarming rate. Remember, I knew to stay upright, I knew not to cross my skies, I definitely didn't want to kill myself but no one ever told me how to turn or stop! Part way down the mountain, a malicious pine tree leapt out into the middle of the ski slope. On another occasion, in a different setting, I might even had admired that tree. It was, after all, a beautiful pine tree. But at that moment, I could see no beauty in it at all. I just stared at that vicious pine tree in absolute horror. I was transfixed. Mesmerized. In my terror, I completely forgot about the fundamental principle of human nature that we spoke about just a few minutes ago. Do you remember...WHATEVER GETS YOUR ATTENTION? GETS YOU! Well, it got me! Wham! As you can see, the collision wasn't fatal, but I did learn an important lesson that day

that every successful advertiser already knows. Whatever gets your attention.....gets you!

The apostle Paul says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world..” And that will only happen if you don’t focus on the things of this world. Some people think that they can focus on the things of this world without conforming to the pattern of this world. But they are only fooling themselves. They are dangerously deceived.

Several years ago, a distinguished gentleman came into my office. He had attended a men’s conference and participated in a workshop on guarding your heart. He told me that he had been caught in the snare of immorality. It started with a few pictures on the Internet. He convinced himself that no one would be harmed. Right or wrong? Wrong. You can’t focus on the things of this world without being conformed to the pattern of this world. Before long, he was visiting immoral chat rooms. Just as an observer, you understand. He didn’t say anything, at first. But the compromise continued. Inappropriate phone conversations. And finally multiple acts of unfaithfulness. At every step of the way, he convinced himself that he could stop at any time with no negative consequences. By the time he came to my office, he had dishonored God privately and publicly, and he had broken his wife’s heart.

Do not fool yourself. If you are going to heed Paul’s counsel to not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, you cannot focus on the things of this world.

But Paul not only tells us what not to do. He also tells us what to do. Let’s read Romans 12:2. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The renewing of your mind leads to transformation. The Greek word translated “be transformed” is the verb *metamorphoomai*, from which we get the English word *metamorphosis*. Radical transformation. Radical change.

And how does the radical transformation occur? Through the renewing of your mind. And more specifically, through the healing of your conscience. Look carefully at Romans 12:2 again. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

We're not just talking here about a healthy intellect. Mental acuity. We're talking about a mind that is fully in tune with the will of God. A mind that is sensitive to spiritual realities. A mind that is so connected to the mind of God that it can be said of us, “We have the mind of Christ.” And when your mind is fully in harmony with the will of God, when your conscience is healed, when your mind is made whole, you will experience radical metamorphosis, radical transformation.

So here is the key question for this morning. We know that we don't want to be conformed to the pattern of the world. That happens by focusing on the things of this world. Because whatever gets your attention, gets you. We know that God wants us to experience radical transformation by the renewing of our minds. But how exactly are our minds renewed?

Someone might say, “Well, if we are conformed to the pattern of this world by focusing on the things of this world, perhaps our minds are renewed by focusing on the things of God.” Several passages of Scripture from the writings of the apostle Paul support that idea. Let's consider a few of them. Phil 4:8. “.....” And don't miss Phil 4:9. Behavior follows focus. Whatever gets your attention, gets you.

Consider also these words of the apostle Paul to the Christians in Corinth. 2 Cor 3:18 “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his

likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” We reflect the Lord’s glory by focusing on Him. And by beholding, we are changed! Transformed.

Radical metamorphosis. Our minds are renewed. Our consciences are healed, so we can discern the perfect will of God. Our thoughts are so in tune with the will of God that it can be said of us, “You have the mind of Christ.”

Now someone might be thinking, how long do I need to focus my attention on Jesus in order for my mind to be renewed? What’s the answer? How long? Continually. This radical transformation is not a one time event. It is the work of a lifetime. A daily experience. But you say, “I can’t spend all of my time focusing on Jesus! I have work to do. I have a house to take care of. I have a clients to see. I have assignments to complete.

I know you do. We all have much to do. But listen to this radical thought. Did you know that it is possible to get everything done that God asks you to do and still stay focused on Jesus at the same time?

You can do more than one thing at the same time, can’t you? You exercise and listen to the radio at the same time. You prepare dinner and talk about the events of the day at the same time. You drive your car plan your daily schedule at the same time. I’ve even tried reading a book while I drive. But I don’t do that anymore. It’s too dangerous, especially if the book is really interesting? But you could listen to a tape or a CD and drive at the same time. Right.

Well, if it is possible to process more than one thing at the same time in your mind, then it’s possible to always focus on the Lord no matter what you’re doing. Right? That’s what the Psalmist David was talking about when he said, “I have set the Lord always before me.”

A 17th century lay brother by the name of brother Lawrence practiced the discipline of

always staying focused on the Lord, no matter what he was doing. He actually worked in the kitchen at a religious community, but focused on the Lord as much in the midst of his pots and pans as he did when he knelt to receive communion. His testimony is recorded in a classic work on spiritual life entitled “The Practice of the Presence of God.”

If whatever gets your attention, gets you, then I want to keep my attention on Jesus. Not just once a week, when I come to church for an hour or two, but all through the week. Every day. Every hour. Continually. That’s the secret of a healthy mind. That’s the pathway to a healed conscience and a mind that is fully in harmony with the will of God.

Do you want a healthy mind? Then turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth, with all of their corruption, and the things of earth, with all of their allurements, the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.