

PRACTICES OF JESUS FOLLOWERS

BODY CARE WEEK ONE

“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



BY KELSEY WALEGA

BODY CARE // DAY 1

Our bodies are incredible. These bodies experienced hugs, kisses and snuggles as a newborn. These bodies crawled for the first time and then eventually moved us to start walking. These bodies learned how to ride a bike, shoot a basketball, and color in the lines. These bodies took us down a water slide, a roller coaster, a sledding hill and taught us that screaming while doing these activities is okay. These bodies experienced physical pain throughout the years be it broken bones, cuts or burns. These bodies moved us across the stage for our high school graduation. These bodies experienced waves crashing into it, the burning of thighs up a mountain, and even what it feels like to lay down in grass. These bodies traveled us around the country or even around the world. These bodies, my friends, have been good to us. These bodies have been our constant companion. They go with us everywhere. They have been with us through the highest highs and the lowest lows. Our bodies were fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator of the Universe. We were created in awe and wonder, and God took time to create each of us.

We are embodied beings which means that our bodies, our minds and our souls are interconnected. The beauty in this is that when we take care of these wonderful bodies of ours, we start to bring health and wholeness to our souls. These bodies of ours are a gift from God, and we would all do well to take care of these precious gifts. Over the next two weeks we will look at a few practices to help us take care of and honor our bodies. We will practice embodiment, physical exercise, walking, and even play (yes, we can still play as adults), creating, eating, drinking, and sleeping.

We only get one body this side of heaven, how will you treat your beautiful and wonderful creation of God?

“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

Reflections....

How are you currently taking care of and honoring your body? Are there ways you could better honor your body? What is one thing you could do today to honor your body?



SELF CARE // DAY 2

The God of the Universe not only created us in His image with so much love and care, but our bodies are temples of God. If we have decided to follow Christ, then God dwells within us through the Holy Spirit. We are beautifully and wonderfully made, and our bodies house the living and active Spirit of God. Self-care then is an act of worship where we take care of these bodies that God both created and inhabits. Parker Palmer writes in *Let Your Life Speak*, “self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others.”¹ Our lives, our bodies, our whole beings are a gift. We were not created just to take up space on this earth, but rather to use our whole selves in service to God and others. By taking care ourselves, we are better equipped to serve others. By loving ourselves, we are better able to love God and others. We are only able to do for others what we have first done for ourselves, “love others as well as you love yourself” (Mark 12:30).

Self-care includes so many different facets: getting enough sleep, drinking water, eating well, being active, being kind to ourselves, having fun, and so much more. For today, think of ways you can nurture and care for your body: bubble baths, massages, exercise, soft sheets or pillows, buying flowers for yourself, getting a haircut, using a face mask, stretching, reading a book for fun, pick up a hobby you’ve missed doing, spend time with a life-giving friend, gather friends to play a round of golf, or whatever else you can think of.

“You realize, don’t you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you?”

- 1 Corinthians 3:16

Practice...

Today, what is one thing you will do to care for and nurture your body?



EMBODIMENT // DAY 3

Maybe embodiment is a term you've heard, maybe not. Regardless, what this term means is that we are whole beings. Our bodies house all of who we are, our mind, our heart, our soul, and everything that keeps our bodies functioning. We are embodied beings. Practicing embodiment just means that we become aware of ourselves in these bodies. We breathe deeply and notice where we are holding tension. Instead of demeaning ourselves with what we wish were different about our bodies, we instead extend kindness and thankfulness towards our bodies. Embodiment then means that we don't hate or love our bodies based on how it looks or functions, rather we enjoy being in our bodies. We enjoy being in our bodies that were created by God and created in the image of God. And this takes practice.

Get into a comfortable position. Breathe deeply for several breaths. Then slowly and meditatively read the words on the next page from Hillary McBride. Read it once, twice, or a dozen times if you need to. And come back to this when you find yourself in need of being kind towards this body of yours that has done so much for you. This body of yours that was created with such care by God. This body of yours that God placed you in for a specific purpose. This body of yours is amazing, never forget it.

**“God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God
he created them; male and female he created them.”**

Genesis 1:27

You have always been good
Right from the beginning
I'm sorry that anyone told you otherwise
This breath
This head
These hands
This love
Those feet
That smile
Your ears
This heart
This breath
This breath
This breath
Good, all good. So, so, so good.
You are loved
You are so loved
You are lovable
You have been working so hard
I don't have to know how, to know that it's true
You are precious
You are not a mistake, you are so on purpose
You are not broken
You never were
I'm sorry that you might have thought that
I'm sorry anyone might have made you think that
You are enough
You are so so enough
You do not have to earn your enough-ness
You do not have to grovel for value, for love, for goodness
You already have it
You already are it
You are loved
You are loved
You are love
You are love
You are love

-Hillary McBride²

EMBODIMENT // DAY 4

Ruth Haley Barton writes that “paying attention to your breathing is one of the simplest ways of getting in touch with your existence as a body.”³ With this in mind, settle into a comfortable position either on the floor, in your bed or sitting in a chair. Then breath slowly and pay attention to your breath. Allow these breaths to release tension you may be holding in your body. Notice your neck, shoulders, back, chest, abdomen, hips, thighs, knees, calves and feet. Do you notice any places of tightness as you breathe?

Now gently turn your attention to the whole of your body. Notice how you feel in your body. Are you embarrassed about it? Do you enjoy it? What happens inside you when you consider the idea that you were created by God and God dwells within you?

Consider now how you have been caring for your body. Have you been attending to the needs of your body? Or have you been neglecting or abusing it in some way?

As you continue to breathe deeply and close out your time, is there anything God is trying to say to you through your body?

To close out your time, read these words as a reminder of how beautiful, wonderful and unique you are...“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

Reflections....

How were the last two days of embodiment practices for you? Do you feel closer to yourself? God? Others?

PLAY // DAY 5

I gotta ask you, when's that last time you did something just for fun? Like you skateboarded around your neighborhood because you wanted to and it sounded fun. Or played a board game with your friends or roommates. Or shot baskets because you wanted to, or colored, or cooked, or wrote, or whatever it is that you do for fun? Here's the deal, this season of life is stressful. Just as soon as we think it can't get worse, it does. But just because things are hard and the world is literally on fire at times, doesn't mean that we have to stop having fun. Fun can help you relieve some stress and even brighten your day and outlook on life. Playing is a great way to remind yourself that you don't have to take everything so seriously and you can take 15 minutes or even hours to play.

The great news is that playing can be anything! For me, even playing fetch with my dog (Coach) is a form of play that I love. Reading is fun for me. Watching a quick episode of Gilmore Girls is fun for me. Even playing a quick game of Monopoly Go or Cribbage (and winning) is fun for me. The sky is the limit here, so what will it be for you today?

“If you never did you should. These things are fun
and fun is good!” - Dr. Suess

Practice...

So, what sounds fun to you today or this week? How will you incorporate fun
into your life this week?

Make your plan for what you're going to do, how you're going to do it and when!

END NOTES

1. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 80.
 2. “You Are Good - A Meditation,” Hillary L. McBride, <https://hillarylmcbride.com/blog/>.
 3. Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 89.
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