

PRACTICES OF JESUS FOLLOWERS

BODY CARE WEEK TWO

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

1 Corinthians 3:16



BY KELSEY WALEGA

EXERCISE // DAY 1

Part of taking care of our bodies is being active and getting exercise. There are countless health benefits to moving and getting our heart rate up, and thanks to the internet we don't even have to leave the comfort of our home to get in a good workout. Exercise is so much more than getting a bikini ready body, or getting the muscle tone and definition you desire. Exercise can certainly be done with those goals in mind, but the benefits go beyond getting ready for swimsuit season. Exercise has certain health benefits like preventing chronic illnesses, building immunity towards illness, and also prolonging our life expectancy. Exercise also helps improve your mood by reducing stress and anxiety, it helps improve your learning ability and decision making abilities, and it improves your self confidence as you begin achieving goals you set for yourself. More than all of that, physical activity can be done with friends to meet your relational needs or done solo to give you some much needed alone time. The bottom line is that exercise is a great way for us to honor our bodies and treat our bodies well.

This year has been hard for so many reasons, and physical activity can help your body and mind release whatever stress, tension or anxiety you have been holding onto in this year. The beauty of working out and being active is that you get to decide what works best for you and your body. Do exercise that works for you, not what you see others doing or what you think working out should be. Just do something that gets your heart rate up, your blood pumping and sweat flowing.

Many experts recommend exercising 30 minutes, 5 times a week. But, do whatever feels right for you! Even if you can only get in a 10 or 15 minute workout a few times a week, that is better than nothing. There are so many ways to be active and honor our bodies through exercise, so do what feels best for you. Yoga, running, walking, hiking, strength training, barre, biking, skiing, and so much more. Honor your body and get out there and move!

Reflections....

Do you have a regular practice of exercise, one which helps you break a sweat a few times a week? Are there any distractions you allow to hijack your exercise rhythms? What can you do to prevent that?

Practice...

Do something active for 20-30 minutes today. Then a few hours later ask yourself how you feel physically, emotionally, and mentally? If you feel better, get out there and do it again tomorrow!



SLEEPING // DAY 2

Slowly read through Genesis 1 at least once before you read the following...

One thing I find fascinating about the account of creation in Genesis 1, is that there was evening first and then morning. Not morning and then evening. The day here begins at sundown, not sunup. So often I think of my day beginning when my alarm goes off in the morning, or even when my iPhone changes days at 12:01 a.m. Never have I considered that in the created order of things in Genesis 1, our days should begin in the evening... when we're sleeping.

Go with me on a journey to consider what this can mean for us. This means that our days begin as we are sleeping. Our days begin with rest, with sleep. In speaking about this John Mark Comer notes that in the created order, "we live and we work and we have our being through a place of rest."¹

Sleep and rest are so important that when God created the heavens and the earth, he started our days with rest. He knew that life would be demanding, that there is work to be done, people to serve and care for, and an almost endless list of things to do. God knew we would need rest. God designed us to work from a place of rest, not towards a place of rest. Health experts, scientists, and people at the top of their respective fields have written much about the importance of sleep. I just can't get past how the Creator of the Universe knew all of that at the dawn of time when there was evening then morning.

Reflections...

About how many hours of sleep do you get each night?

Is sleep something you treat as important? Why or why not?

Do you let anything get in the way of sleeping enough? (School, work, friends, Netflix, your phone, etc.)

Is there one change you can make this week either to sleep more, or make sleep a priority? (I.e. - let yourself sleep in one morning, set a bedtime for yourself, etc.)

WALKING // DAY 3

When everything shut down last March and I was stuck inside my tiny home, I started going on a lot of walks. So. Many. Walks. What I began to notice though was that these walks helped me think more clearly. They actually helped me process through whatever was heavy on my mind. What I later learned is that walking helps clear your mind, it helps to erase any brain fog that's been happening and give you more creative ideas. And walking helps give us a break from staring at our screen all day or even sitting down all day. Before the pandemic, the average American sat for over 9 hours and I've got to believe that's even more now. So this week after your zoom class before you begin homework, take a lap around your block. If you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed with all you have to do, take another lap around your block. Maybe you'll find yourself feeling stuck on a problem in homework, take a lap. Want to hangout with your roommates and check in, take a lap. Want to enjoy your morning coffee before the day begins, take a lap. Want to count walking today as your form of exercise, take a lap.

Practice...

You don't have to walk for long, just get out and do it and see if this helps your mental clarity and overall well-being. And if you're an overachiever like me, you can even try to hit 10,000 steps.

Reflections....

After you take a walking break, reflect on whether or not you have a better ability to think, make decisions, and even if your overall mood improved!

EATING AND DRINKING // DAY 4

In college, I minored in Food and Nutrition. Then after college, I must have blocked out literally everything I learned in those classes. I was working at the Ski & Ride School in Breckenridge during ski season, making next to nothing (let me assure you that my meager hourly wage was not indicative of the astronomical price of lift tickets). Because I was living on very little, I had to be extremely frugal when it came to buying groceries. I ate a lot of Red Baron frozen pizza, Annie's Mac n' Cheese, PB&J's, and Clif Bars. And by "I ate a lot of", I mean that those were my four main food groups. I was also in a season where I was drinking heavily while skiing, after work, and on the weekend. Later I would come to realize that these foods and the amount of alcohol I was consuming contributed to some mild depression, overall sluggishness, fatigue, and a lack of desire to do much of anything. I just thought I was depressed, which was true, but I didn't realize that what I had been putting into my body was contributing to this depression in a significant way.

What we consume and put into our bodies helps with our current health, our future health and even our mental health. The better we eat, the clearer our brain is and the better we feel. However, we're busy. We don't always remember that we need to drink more water. We didn't have time to go to the store to get groceries this week, so now we're eating out. It's more convenient to eat meals we just have to heat up rather than cook from scratch. And then there's this notion that eating super healthy is going to cost a lot of money, and we just don't have that kind of cash.

The good news is this, eating well doesn't have to cost a lot of money nor does it need to take a long time to prepare healthy meals. If you would like some snack, meal and even shopping ideas you can head to theannexboulder.com for more resources!

“He makes the grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate - bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.”

Psalm 104:14-15

Reflections...

What, if anything, hinders you from paying attention to what you are putting into your body?

Is there an area of improvement for you in eating and drinking well?

What is one change you can make this week with food or alcohol?

CREATING // DAY 5

I acknowledge that what I am about to say makes me sound like I am somewhere around the age of 67...but I've recently discovered how wonderful cross stitching is and now I cross stitch in the evenings. It is so wonderful. Using my hands in this way allows me to literally focus on the task at hand, and it helps ease whatever stress or anxiety I bring into that moment. Using my hands relaxes me. According to Psychology today, "research has shown that hand activity from knitting to woodworking to growing vegetables or chopping them are useful for decreasing stress, relieving anxiety, and modifying depression...functioning hands also foster a flow of in the mind that leads to spontaneous joyful, creative thought."² Even in the 19th century doctors would prescribe knitting to anxiety-ridden women without fully knowing the exact neuroscience behind it. They just knew that the results of this prescription were less anxious women.

Even more than this, we were created by God to create. In the first pages of scripture we see that we have been called by God to fill the earth, subdue the earth, rule over the earth and take care of the earth. These all sound like we are to dominate the earth, but in the original Hebrew these commands actually mean for us to "harness the raw, uncut potential of the earth itself. Make something of the world you've been dropped into."³ We were created to create. And the added benefit is that creating helps clear our heads, gives us a sense of purpose and accomplishment and can even give us a reason to take a quick screen time break.

So today make some time to draw, water color, or doodle. Clean out a closet, drawer or shelf. Bake cookies or make dinner for you and your roommates. Style an area in your room or house. Sew, knit, or crochet. Write a short story or poem. Paint something. Print photos and arrange them in your room. Create a playlist. Build something with your hands. Plant something. Do anything where you are using your hands to create something.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

-Genesis 1:28

Reflections...

When was the last time you created something with your hands?

What's one thing you've always wanted to create with your hands? What steps will you take to create this week?



END NOTES

1. “Start With Rest,” Bridgetown Daily, <https://bridgetown.church/teaching/bridgetown-daily/start-with-rest/>.
 2. Carrie Baron, M.D., “Creativity, Happiness, and Your Own Two Hands,” Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-creativity-cure/201205/creativity-happiness-and-your-own-two-hands>.
 3. John Mark Comer, *Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 55.
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**“THE CHRISTIAN PRACTICE OF HONORING
THE BODY IS BORN OF THE CONFIDENCE
THAT OUR BODIES ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE
OF GOD’S OWN GOODNESS. AS THE PLACE
WHERE THE DIVINE PRESENCE DWELLS,
OUR BODIES ARE WORTHY OF CARE AND
BLESSING...IT IS THROUGH OUR BODIES
THAT WE PARTICIPATE IN GOD’S ACTIVITY IN
THE WORLD.”**

- STEPHANIE PARSELL