

The Things We Do To Our Body

On Sunday, we continued our New Year's sermon series called "Getting Myself Together" by taking some time to consider how to be better caretakers of our bodies.

1. Warm up question: If your body was a ride (or attraction) in an amusement park (think Kings Island, Cedar Point, or Disney World), what ride (or attraction) might it be? Explain your choice.
2. NPR host and sports writer Tommy Tomlinson has written a new book called *The Elephant In The Room: One Man's Quest to Get Smaller in a Growing America*. In his book, Tomlinson describes his long struggle with weight and how that has affected his life. His repeated failed attempts to bring his weight under control have often left him wondering, "What the heck is wrong with me?" On one level or another, we can all relate to Tomlinson's experience because, in one way or another, we all have some aspect of body care where we struggle. For some it's weight, but for others its things like not enough sleep, too much stress, failure to get up and move, skipping our annual wellness exam, failure to follow doctor's orders, eating sugar even after a diabetes diagnosis, smoking, too much caffeine, too much alcohol, substance abuse, reckless sex, etc., etc.
 - a. What is the greatest body care challenge you face? If you were to give yourself a letter grade for how well you're doing with that challenge, what grade would you choose? Explain your grade and how that makes you feel. (Reminder: What's said in Oasis stays in Oasis.)
 - b. Dr. Edward Miller led a study of former heart bypass patients. He found that, by two years after surgery, 90% of all the bypass patients had failed to sustain the lifestyle changes recommended by their doctor, even though those changes were a matter of life or death. Why is it so hard for us humans to change ingrained life patterns even when our life depends on it?
 - c. Have you ever known someone who ignored a body care issue until it became urgent or even fatal? What happened? When the problem became acute, how did that person feel? How did that person's loved ones feel?
3. Body care was an issue in the New Testament church at Corinth. Having learned that Jesus sets us free from religious law, a number of the Corinthian Christians began using their liberty in sexually promiscuous ways. They were frequenting prostitutes, with the associated risk of sexually transmitted diseases, which were often fatal in that day. A favorite slogan of these Christians was, "All things are lawful for me!" Paul responded in his first letter to the Corinthians. Read I Corinthians 6:12-20.
 - a. What point is Paul trying to make in verse 12? Why is it so important not to be "dominated by anything?"

- b. Another common statement among these liberated Christians was, “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.” In other words, since the stomach will someday be destroyed, what you put in your stomach doesn’t matter. Likewise, since your body will someday be destroyed, what you do with your body doesn’t matter. What are the counterpoints Paul raises in the verses that follow?
 - c. In verses 19 and 20, Paul reminds us that we have the Holy Spirit within us. What’s the significance of that when it comes to body care?
4. It’s easy to say that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, we should glorify God through our bodies, but hard to actually do it. On Sunday, Jeff suggested four steps that might help. Those steps are printed on p. 3. Read through them together, then discuss the questions below.
- a. Which of these four steps most resonates with you – and why? Which of these steps do you question – and why?
 - b. Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - c. The most common body care issue in our culture is weight. Tommy Tomlinson says, “Here are two things I have come to believe about diets: 1) Almost any diet works in the short term. 2) Almost no diet works in the long term. Losing weight is not the hard part. The hard part is living with your diet for years, maybe the rest of your life.” So instead of trying to radically change his diet all at once, Tomlinson is changing his diet gradually. He was consuming large amounts of fast food. So his first step is to eliminate all fast food from his diet. He allows himself to eat whatever he wants, for the time being, but it can’t be fast food. And he’s begun to gradually lose weight. Once his “no fast food” boundary is firmly established, he’ll add one more incremental step, so on and so forth until he gets to where he wants to be. What do you think about his approach?
 - d. Tell us about a time in your life when you made a positive change in caring for your body. What was the key to your success?
5. Pastor Jeff has been encouraging us to consider whether we feel called to create a 2019 Personal Spiritual Action Plan, which is kinda like version 2.0 of our old Soul Care Plans. You can find an easy fillable template at www.LifeJourney.church (scroll down the home page to the green “Spiritual Action Plan” button). During worship on Feb. 10 we will dedicate our Plans to God in a congregational prayer.
- a. Do you feel called to create a 2019 Plan? Why or why not? (It’s perfectly fine to say no. We’re not all put together in the same way.)
 - b. So far in our New Year’s Sermon Series, we’ve talked about spiritual practices, relationships, personal finance, and body care. Next week we’ll talk about mental hang ups. Preliminarily, what do you think one of your key personal growth goals might be?

Four Steps To Gaining Better Control Over the Chaos of Our Cravings

1. Claim your power!

When your cravings kick your butt time and time again, it's easy to get discouraged. Remember, the same power that transformed earth's chaos into beauty – the Spirit of God – dwells inside you. Claim the presence of that power and ask for it to be released in you. As Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right."

2. Start flexing your Spirit muscle by practicing new patterns (incrementally).

Just as God's Spirit tamed the chaos of creation by creating healthy boundaries – separating light from darkness, and dry land from the seas – so too we tame the chaos of our cravings by allowing God's Spirit to establish healthy boundaries in us. We do that by creating new habits. Each time we repeat a positive behavior that behavior grows stronger, creating spiritual muscle memory that makes it harder and harder for the old chaos of our cravings to break through.

BTW, it's often best to create new habits incrementally, a step at a time – just as God tamed creation in seven incremental steps. If we try to change too much at once, we may get overwhelmed and give up.

3. Don't try to tame your negative behaviors without exploring the underlying motivations that feed those behaviors.

Understanding the distorted thinking that fuels negative behaviors can help defuse the felt need to repeat those behaviors.

4. When you fall down, get up again, as many times as it takes until you succeed. Relentless persistence!

When you fail, don't get discouraged. Understand that failure, and learning from failure, is a necessary part of the process that will ultimately lead to success. So view each failure as progress that brings you one step closer to ultimate success, if you persist. That's how successful people create change in their lives!