

Physical Fitness (Part 2)

By David Feddes

We're thinking about physical fitness and caring for your health, and this is part two of my presentation on that. We've already looked at nutrition, exercise, and rest, and in this talk we're going to be focusing on caution, checkups, and total fitness.

First, let's just review where we've been. When it comes to nutrition, it's best to eat mostly whole, unprocessed foods rather than stuff out of boxes or from restaurants. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits. Eat some meat and eggs and dairy and nuts. Beware of things that include too many trans fats. Don't eat too much added sugar. That means things like candy or cookies or donuts or soft drinks or fruit juices should be things that you can enjoy but in moderation—not too much of them. By the same token, not too much starch, not too many processed carbohydrates. White bread, for instance, or white rice—you can have it, but don't overdo it. French fries, pizza, breakfast cereal—some of them are worse than others, some are better than others. None of them are evil, but some of those sugar cereals should not be eaten too much if you want to watch how much sugar you take in.

And then intermittent fasting—take one time a week where you skip a meal or a couple days a week for spiritual purposes. Of course, a time of fasting now and then is important for prayer or to show God repentance or other spiritual reasons for fasting (Matthew 6:16–18), but sometimes intermittent fasting for short or longer periods can also be good for your physical health. Have a doctor's advice on that.

Exercise: walk, run, bike, or swim 20 to 30 minutes three to five times a week. That is for the health of your heart and lungs and your overall circulatory system. To avoid losing muscle mass as you age and to keep your muscles in good health, two to three times a week do some upper body exercises, some lower body exercises, and some core exercises. I gave some examples—you can look up others or maybe have some favorites of your own already. There is no one exercise that everybody must do, but doing something is usually good for your muscles so that you prevent muscle loss, osteoporosis, and loss of bone density. Make sure you stretch before and after a workout so you don't hurt yourself during the workout and so that your body remains flexible.

When it comes to rest, make sure you take one day out of seven. Don't make excuses. If you just keep working day after day after day and say, "Oh, I'm too busy," God said you're not too busy. God said you can get done what you need to get done in six days (Exodus 20:9–10). God is not going to give you more work to do in a week than you can get done in six days. So take a day off. Make sure you get enough sleep—seven to eight hours minimum. Some people need a little more than that. Very few should have less than seven hours a day. Don't skimp on your sleep. It's a blessing from the Lord (Psalm 127:2).

And then do something fun—recreation. Make sure that it's not all work and no play, all seriousness and never any laughter. A cheerful heart is good medicine (Proverbs 17:22), so make sure that you take advantage of that fact and also just receive God's good gifts in life and recreate. It's named "recreation" because it looks like "re-creation." That's what really happens.

When you're cheerful, there's something that just renews and recreates who you are and your ability to do things.

Today we want to spend more time on the last three aspects of caring for your health: caution, checkups, and total fitness. Caution is important because accidents are a major cause of early death. Another major cause of early death is alcohol and drugs and suicide, and these can be related to not being cautious enough and careful enough in dealing with certain things.

When it comes to this whole area of caution, we want to avoid accidents and addiction and the other things that can destroy lives. When you drive a vehicle, drive without drinking, drive without texting, drive without extreme speeding—because these are very dangerous things. Many of the fatal accidents involve someone who is drinking or texting. Speeding too can be pretty hazardous. So drive carefully and wisely. Use seat belts. Use car seats. Use helmets. If you ride a motorcycle, it's probably better for your health if you don't ride too many motorcycles. But if you do love motorcycles and love riding them, or just love riding a pedal bike at high speed, a helmet is a good idea. A biker who wipes out is going to have a lot better chance to make it out of there alive if you're wearing a helmet.

Tobacco is bad for you. You shouldn't use tobacco unless you're one of those people who celebrates a big event like the birth of a baby by smoking one cigar. I can't stand cigars, but if you celebrate with tobacco like that, so be it. Other than that, frequent use of tobacco—whether by smoking or by chewing tobacco—has been linked very strongly with high rates of cancer: lung cancer, lip and throat cancer. So you just have to stay away from tobacco.

Stay away from the illegal drugs that are so addictive—heroin, cocaine, and all the rest of them. Don't even mess with them, because if you do, you can get addicted, and it's very, very hard to get free of them. They ruin your life, even if they don't kill you—and they can kill you.

There are also legal drugs that we need to be very careful with. Sometimes doctors are too quick to prescribe them. And sometimes, even if it's not the doctor's fault, a patient who has had certain kinds of opioids or legal painkillers can become very addicted to them and be destroyed by them.

Drinking is something that, if done at all—drinking of alcoholic beverages, wine or beer or other such things—should be done in great moderation. I'm not a person who says it is always wicked and wrong to drink anything with an alcoholic content, because I believe the Bible indicates that wine can be a gift from God (Psalm 104:14–15). But it also says in many cases that wine and beer can be devastating. "Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). It gives pictures of people whose drunkenness is wrecking their lives (Proverbs 23:29–35).

So if you're going to think about any kind of alcoholic beverage, if you have anybody in your immediate family or a close relative who has a drinking problem, you would be wise to leave alcohol alone entirely. Sometimes there may be a bodily or genetic factor, or it may run in families. If you're from a certain background—such as Native American—that has extremely high addiction rates, stay away from alcohol completely. There are some ethnic or national groups where addiction rates are much lower and the risk is not so high, but Native Americans in

particular have had unusually high rates of addiction. So it would be wise for anybody, if you have relatives or if you're from a particular ethnic background with high rates of addiction, to leave it alone completely.

Otherwise, if you do drink—maybe at a festive occasion a glass of wine, or you drink a can of beer with a pizza or a bottle of beer now and then—that's not wicked. You may enjoy it as a gift from God. But any kind of overuse of alcohol is always bad if it leads to drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18). So don't use it in those circumstances.

Another area of hygiene is just wash your hands. During flu season, during cold season especially, if you wash your hands you avoid the spreading of harmful bacteria. Good cleanliness—brushing your teeth so your teeth don't rot, so you don't get gum disease—those are parts of basic hygiene that can help your health.

Chastity is an important part of holiness and of morality—being celibate as a single and not getting sexually involved with other people, and when you're married, being sexually intimate only with your spouse. That's part of holiness and morality, but it's also just part of good health. You don't get a lot of nasty diseases if you and your spouse are faithful to each other. Proverbs says, "Preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you. Then you will go on your way in safety" (Proverbs 3:21–23). Sound judgment—that's what I'm talking about when I'm talking about caution. Don't do dumb stuff. Don't take unnecessary risks.

There are times in life when you may risk something for the sake of the gospel, when you do something dangerous for the sake of the kingdom. But doing drugs just because you thought it would be cool to experiment with it, or driving while texting because you're in a hurry and you've just got to get that text sent off or you've just got to read that latest text—that is not risking your life for the sake of the gospel. That is risking your life needlessly. So use caution.

Another area of health is medical checkups—seeking help if you've got health problems. I'll give an example. It's not even a fatal or life-threatening thing. A while back I had back pain. My back—my lower back—hurt a lot, and it just kept hurting, and it wasn't getting better. I wasn't sure what to do. I thought, "Well, you know, when people get old, they get more aches and pains," and I was getting older, so hey, maybe that back pain is just me getting old. Or maybe I hurt it doing something and it just won't get better. But finally I decided to go see a chiropractor—a back specialist.

And I don't like going to doctors. I am one of those people who only goes to the doctor if I've got one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel. I don't want to go to doctors. But my back was bugging me, and I thought, "Well, I should probably at least have them look at it." So I went to the chiropractor, and he asked me a few questions. Then he said, "I know your problem. I know what your problem is exactly." And it's not that you're too old or that you got hurt—because I told him what I'd been doing. As a pastor and as a professor, I spend a lot of time with a computer, and I'm working on lectures and sermons and the like on my computer. So I'd be sitting in a reclining chair with my feet up and my laptop on my lap and then looking at the laptop, working on it. And he said, "You know what that's doing? It's stretching your lower back muscles every day when you have your feet up like that with your back kind of bent." He said,

"Quit doing that, and I'll give you a couple of exercises to strengthen your lower back and to stretch out those muscles a little bit. And then if you get a chair where you sit right with your feet on the floor, you'll be okay."

So I did what the man said, and within a few weeks, that nagging back pain was all gone. If I hadn't gone to that man, I probably would have had back pain for the rest of my life and thought it was all because of old age. Now, some things do happen when you age that you can't do anything about, but some things you really can do something about, and it's wise to get a checkup and find out. Regular exams by a physician, especially as you get older, are a good idea. Sometimes blood tests to find out your cholesterol levels or other kinds of tests can be helpful. Get your blood pressure checked—these are things that can just alert you to how you're doing in various aspects of your physical health.

For some people, cancer screening can be very important—especially if you have a higher risk. If you're a lady with someone in your family tree who has had breast cancer, for instance, then it's wise for you to have mammograms or other kinds of cancer screenings on a fairly regular basis so that in case you do get it, you can catch it early and do something about it. In my own family, my father had prostate cancer, and he discovered it by a routine check at the doctor. He had no symptoms—nothing bothering him, nothing wrong with him—but they did a PSA test, and his PSA was way too high. That was an indicator, and the doctor confirmed that he had prostate cancer. So he had that dealt with, and he lived for many, many years after that and lived in good health till the age of 87 when he died suddenly. So God gave him many more years, and it came about partly because that screening caught his cancer very early in the process.

A couple years ago, my oldest brother had something similar. He had that test done—a PSA test—found out he had prostate cancer. It was dealt with, and he's living in good health with no sign of problems. So cancer screenings, especially if you have a higher risk, are a wise idea. Now with my older brother and my father having had that cancer, I get that test every couple of years as well—because I should.

In short, don't be your only doctor. Don't be like me in the sense that I didn't want to go to the doctor. Be like me in the sense that I did go and got some help. If you have a health problem, or if you just need a regular checkup now and then because you have heightened risk as your age advances or because you have relatives with a certain problem, then it is wise to have someone else with expertise—not just to be your own physician.

As you do all this, though, I do want to caution against being too dependent on medicines and on the medical professions. We need to understand that healing comes primarily through the way God made our bodies. We need to value our Creator's provision of self-healing bodies that are fueled and renewed by real foods (Psalm 139:13–14). That's where nutrition and exercise and just good health practices come in. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In some societies, we've come to rely too much on doctors to fix things, when in fact, if we took the right care of our bodies, the bodies can repair themselves to a considerable degree.

We also need to beware of secular thinking—the kind of thinking that ignores God, the kind of thinking that has involved too much of a profit motive. So you can have secular thinking and

profit motives where medical professionals sometimes are not always doing what's best for you, and we need to be aware of that. We need to be aware of the social power of food corporations with their vast wealth, of drug companies and pharmaceutical companies with their huge wealth, and of medical schools and all the dollars that are involved in that.

Because again, food corporations need to make money. Drug companies want to make money. Medical schools and doctors need to make money. And I'm not saying money is always evil—they need to make a living too. But be aware that your health is not always their only concern. A drug company will make more money if a drug is prescribed than if a doctor says, “Sit differently and do these exercises,” or if you're told, “Just drink more water, take in less sugar.” The insulin manufacturers are going to make more money if they can sell insulin. Now, I'm thankful for insulin—some diabetics need it very, very much. My point is simply this: beware of a tendency in medical and wealthy societies to prescribe drugs too quickly and to resort to surgery too soon, because there are sometimes natural ways of healing that could do better.

At the same time, having said all that, do accept the needed medical interventions—the surgeries that have to be done, the interventions that can really help you. Don't be paranoid and say, “Oh, the evil doctors are out to get my money, and the bad drug company...” You know, you can overdo it. You need to be realistic about secular thinking and the profit motive and the social power of big money, but at the same time, be grateful when there's a good cure for something that you've got. And at the same time, take good care of your body so those extreme cures won't be as necessary quite as often.

Nutrition, exercise, rest, caution, wise and judicious use of checkups, and then total fitness. If you're concerned about your physical health, don't neglect other aspects of your health, because those things definitely impact your body.

I'll give you some examples from the Bible. King Asa was actually one of the better kings of Judah—he was mostly good during his reign. But he also did some bad things. He made a wrong alliance with a bad country, and one of God's prophets came and rebuked him for it. And how did Asa react? He put that prophet in prison and he began oppressing people who didn't favor what he had done.

The Bible says Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Now once he got that disease, what did he do? “Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord but only from the physicians” (2 Chronicles 16:12). He went to the doctor, but he didn't want to repent of the sin he had committed, which had brought some of this on him in the first place.

There are times when sin can lead to sickness. Now it is false to say that all sickness is because of some sin you did that caused that sickness, but there are times when an illness can actually be the result of something wrong you've done. And then it won't necessarily help to run off to this doctor and that doctor and another doctor, because you've got a problem that doctors don't fix—you need to go to the Great Physician and confess your sins.

David spoke about this in Psalm 32 as well as in Psalm 38. In Psalm 32 he talks about the blessing of being forgiven by God, and then he remembers what it was like when he had sinned and didn't admit it and wouldn't go to God for forgiveness. He said, “When I kept silent, my

bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped” (Psalm 32:3–4). So he sinned, he wouldn't admit it, and he kept feeling physically worse and worse—like his bones were wasting away.

Or in Psalm 38 he says, “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin” (Psalm 38:3). So that's the negative side. Sometimes sin—unconfessed sin especially—causes problems. There are times in the Bible where someone was struck blind because of a sin or someone was struck dead because of a sin—in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), or people who were partaking of the Lord's Supper in Corinth in an unworthy way. Some of them were actually dying because of their sinful treatment of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27–30). So sin can be harmful—even fatal.

The Bible says, “Fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body” (Proverbs 3:7–8). You see how spiritual health and a positive relationship to the Lord actually can have physical results and improve your physical health.

Sometimes the results are a little more indirect—gluttony, the sin of just always craving more and more, needing more and more, or idolatry, where “their god is their belly” (Philippians 3:19). That can refer to appetites besides just an appetite for food, but it can certainly include food. Food becomes your comfort—when you're kind of depressed, you eat something to feel better. When you're down, food lifts you up. And after a while, food almost becomes your only comfort in life and in death, instead of the Lord Jesus Christ being your comfort.

Food and other things can bring bondage. Alcohol certainly can bring you into bondage. “I have the right to do anything,” some people in Corinth were saying, but the apostle replies, “Not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything—but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12). So gluttony, or having food or alcohol or drugs become your idol or a source of bondage, can have very negative effects on your physical health. But there are spiritual issues sometimes involved.

Now, I've mentioned before that not all overeating is just a spiritual issue or something to feel guilty about. If you're not aware of the impact, for instance, of sugar on you and you eat it—you don't know what impact that has on stimulating your appetite to eat even more—then basically, you need better information and some better dietary practices. And you may find that your ability to control your appetites is greater if you do intermittent fasting, where you get your blood sugars back to normal. And at the spiritual level, you're expressing your craving for God. You may just find that you're also doing well physically too.

Prayer and health can be related. That doesn't mean every prayer always brings an instant fix—but sometimes it does. The Bible says, “Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:14–16). In this context, the illness may be very closely connected with a sin issue. And so when the person is anointed in the presence of the elders and prayed for

and confesses his sins, then he's raised up and the Lord makes him well. You see again that the spiritual has a huge impact on the physical.

Sometimes people in the study of sociology have even studied prayer and found that people who prayed and were prayed for had a better recovery record than those who didn't pray and weren't prayed for. Now, that's not the Bible—that's just the sociologists trying to do a study on these things. So I don't want to draw too much from it, but it just confirms again that your body is not something totally isolated from what's happening in your spirit and in your relationship to God.

Your prayer life, your sense of being forgiven and at peace with God, can have a profound impact on how you're sleeping, on how you're feeling, on how your very body is doing—on your ability to resist diseases, how your immune system is doing. “My words are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body” (Proverbs 4:22). Again, evidence that when you hear God and are in tune with his wisdom, your body benefits from it. “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones” (Proverbs 14:30). If you're coveting, if you're envious, it's not just spiritually bad—it actually can eat away at you. We use those words “eat away at you” because it's having that impact on you physically, whereas if you're at peace, if you have the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23)—those things are great for the spirit and they're mighty good for the body as well.

Gracious words—whether it's words from God, but also gracious words from somebody else, words of encouragement or kindness—“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24). Words from God and words from others—relational words, words that have a positive impact on your emotions—they help your body as well as your soul.

Total fitness affects physical fitness. We've seen how the spiritual does in terms of your walk with God, in terms of not being under God's wrath, in terms of confessing sin—that can bless you physically. Being in good financial health also helps you physically. If you need a doctor, it helps to be able to pay some bills. So your financial health can affect your ability to find help with a physical problem. Your financial well-being also enables you to buy food and to invest in some healthy food rather than just some food that's maybe cheaper but not very good for you in large quantities. So financial health contributes to physical health.

Your intellectual health is good for your body. If you're alert, if you're sharp, if you're curious, if you're always thinking—even here again, the sociologists and the researchers will tell you that people who are active in interacting with others, who are reading, who are staying on top of things—it just has an impact on their body as well. Not to mention, of course, that part of being intellectually healthy might be reading a thing here and there about what's good for you and your health and having good nutrition and exercise practices because you learned about how to take care of your body.

We've seen already how emotions can affect you physically. When something is eating away at you, when you're envious, it hurts your body. When you're terribly distressed and you're in poor emotional health, you can't sleep well, you don't feel like eating—or maybe you do the opposite

thing and you overeat lots of stuff that's bad for you. It's the emotions that are actually driving that and having a physical impact.

Relationships—I've mentioned before there's a lot of research that indicates that divorce is hard on people's physical health. All of us know from our own experience what it's like when you're in a fight with somebody or when you're at odds with them—even if it's not a divorce situation. If it's parents and children who are at each other, or if it's a neighbor or an acquaintance or a coworker and you're angry at each other and you've had a big blow-up—you feel rotten. And it's not just that your emotions feel rotten—after a while, your body can even feel rotten, because your immune system drops, your sleep goes down. Whatever physical and medical explanations they give for that, the fact of the matter is that the Bible also reveals that when relationships are healthy, it's just good for our bodies as well.

Vocationally, if you're doing something and you know God called you to it and you're throwing yourself into it with energy and with vision and excitement, that's good for your body. If you're in the wrong line of work, or if you're in a line of work that might be right but you have the wrong attitude toward it, then it's going to drag you down.

So these are just examples again of how various aspects of total fitness will affect your physical fitness.

Let me just summarize: when it comes to physical fitness, caring for your health involves nutrition—eating and drinking things that are good for you, without getting all hung up on whether this treat is bad for you. Enjoy feasting, enjoy treats, eat stuff you like—but make sure that you know the impact of some things that won't be good for you if you have too much. Exercise—don't sit around. You might have an occupation or something in your pattern of life already that gets you moving around quite a bit several times a week, but if not, then make a point of exercising several times a week. And get the rest you need. Be cautious—don't throw away your life and your health just by being reckless and foolish and careless. Checkups—listen to the advice of medical professionals and people who really understand health and healing. And take care of your whole life—attend to all the aspects of total fitness—and you'll find that your bodily health, your physical fitness, will flourish more as well.

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The body is meant ... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:13-20)

Physical Fitness: Caring for your health

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Rest
- Caution
- Checkups
- Total fitness

Nutrition

- Mostly whole, unprocessed foods
- Plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Some meat, eggs, dairy, nuts
- Less trans fats, less added sugars (candy, cookies, donuts, drinks)
- Less starch, less processed carbs (white bread, fries, pizza, cereal)
- Intermittent fasting

Exercise

- **Cardio:** 3-5 times a week
 - Walk, run, bike, or swim 20-30 min.
- **Strength:** 2-3 times a week
 - **Upper body:** pushups, pull-ups, curls
 - **Lower body:** squats, lunges
 - **Core:** planks
- **Stretch:** before and after workout

Rest

- **Sabbath:** On the seventh day you shall rest. (Exodus 34:21)
- **Sleep:** I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. (Psalm 3:5)
- **Recreation:** A cheerful heart is good medicine. (Proverbs 17:22)

Physical Fitness: Caring for your health

- Nutrition
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Main causes of death

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Respiratory
- **Accidents**
- **Drug/suicide**
- Stroke
- Alzheimer's
- Diabetes
- Flu
- Kidney

Caution

Preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you...Then you will go on your way in safety. (Proverbs 3:21-23) Drive without drinking, texting, speeding

- Use seat belts and car seats
- No tobacco, drugs, or drunkenness
- Hygiene: wash hands, brush teeth
- Chastity: celibate single, faithful spouse

Checkups

- Seek help for health problems
- Regular exams by physician
- Blood pressure, cholesterol
- Cancer screening, especially if you have higher risk
- Don't be your only doctor!

Avoid technolatriy

- Value Creator's provision of self-healing bodies fueled and renewed by real foods
- Beware of secular thinking, profit motive and social power of food corporations, drug companies, and medical schools
- Accept needed medical interventions with grateful discernment, not paranoia

Physical Fitness: Caring for your health

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Rest
- Caution
- Checkups
- **Total fitness**

Total Fitness Affects Physical Fitness

- Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet [after bad alliance, imprisoning prophet, and oppressing people]. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. (2 Chronicles 16:12)
- There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. (Psalm 38:3; see also Psalm 32:3-4)
- Fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body. (Proverbs 3:7-8)
- **Gluttony** (Deuteronomy 21:20, Proverbs 23:20-21)
- **Idolatry** Their god is their belly. (Philippians 3:19)
- **Bondage** “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12)
- The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:15-16)
- My words are life to those who find them ^[11]and health to a man’s whole body. (Proverbs 4:22)
- A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. (Proverbs 14:30)
- Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. (Proverbs 16:24)

Total Fitness Affects Physical Fitness

- Spiritual
- **Physical**
- Financial
- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Relational
- Vocational

Physical Fitness: Caring for your health

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Rest
- Caution
- Checkups
- Total fitness

Why care for your body?

- Your body is a marvel of God's creation.
- Your body is linked with Jesus' body.
- Your body is the Holy Spirit's temple.
- Your body is your offering to God.
- Your body is your gift to your spouse.
- Your body is your equipment for action.
- Physical fitness affects total fitness.