

Honoring God With My Body

HONORING GOD *with My Body*

Journey to Wellness
and a Healthy Lifestyle

KATHERINE PASOUR



NASHVILLE

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Honoring God With My Body

Journey to Wellness and a Healthy Lifestyle

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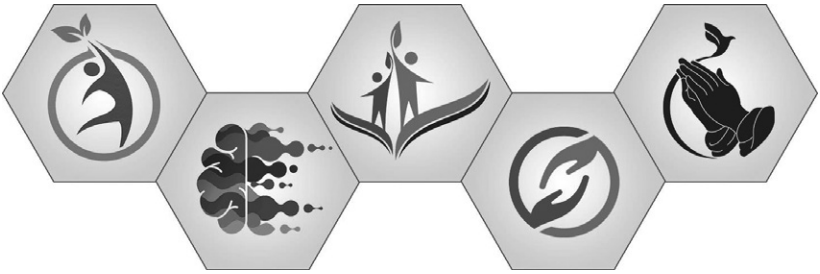
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For all who struggle with the goal of achieving and maintaining wellness through healthier lifestyle choices, I understand your struggle, and my thoughts and prayers are with you on your journey.

WEEK ONE:

Introduction



Goals for Week One

1. Meet and learn about those joining us on our journey to wellness.
2. Recognize that we are awesome and amazing Creations from God.
3. Affirm that Jesus sent us a Counselor—the Holy Spirit—to dwell within us.
4. Study the similarities between our body and a symphony of praise.
5. Emphasize the Holy Bible as our guide toward wellness.
6. Review the organization of our study.

OUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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 body.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, as he reminded his readers that the Holy Spirit dwelled within them, he cautioned them against sexual immorality. However, the apostle also emphasized to the Corinthians—and to us—the vital importance of honoring God with our body. We are urged to care for all aspects of health for our bodies. Keeping our temple—the home of the Holy Spirit—in a healthy condition honors our Creator.

As Jesus was preparing to leave his disciples, he promised them a Comforter and Counselor:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with

you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

John 14:15–21

Jesus loved his disciples so much that he didn't leave them alone when it was time for him to go to the Father. That applies to us as well. We are not alone; we have the Holy Spirit. Because we are God's children, saved by grace through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, we have a divine being living within us. How awesome is that? Shouldn't we honor that gift by making our temple (our body) as healthy as possible to house the Holy Spirit?

This Bible study, *Honoring God with My Body*, prayerfully and scripturally guides us to healthier lifestyle choices that will improve our health. The study is designed for those affirming or seeking wellness so that they might better serve their Lord.

Wellness refers to our quality of life and includes all dimensions of health. There are multiple aspects of good health, but our study will focus on the following six: spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and vocational. The study goes into more detail on each of these in later sections, but as an introduction to this theme, it's important to remember that all aspects of health are interdependent. When one dimension suffers (such as when we are physically in poor health, under extreme stress, or emotionally depressed), all aspects of our health are affected. To

be all that God intended us to be, and to have the wellbeing to live to our fullest in service to Him, we need to be healthy in *all* aspects of wellness.

Consider an orchestra performing a symphony—the composer authors an awesome musical creation; the orchestra works together in balance and harmony, practicing faithfully to achieve their best performance; the conductor mentors, guides, and directs the entire process; and the subsequent performance brings excitement, joy, and appreciation to those blessed to hear it.

Let's imagine our body as that awesome creation from God. If we focus on all dimensions of health, bringing the aspects together in balance (a condition of equilibrium) and harmony (agreement, peace, melodious sound), our body can achieve wellness.¹ Jesus (our spiritual guide) is our conductor for every aspect of our lives. In uniting all the dimensions of wellness to reach our fullest potential for good health, we honor God by providing a healthy dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name,
O Most High, proclaiming your love in the morning and your
faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and
the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds,
LORD; I sing with joy at what your hands have done. How
great are your works, LORD, how profound your thoughts!

Psalm 92:1–5

SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG

Music, both vocal and instrumental, has expressed human emotion since ancient times. The Israelites were no exception to this practice—“all of life could be brought under the spell of song.”² And we see in the Bible that music and dancing were used in times of celebration.

Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of timbrels and harps?

Genesis 31:27

Jesus also tells of a father who rejoiced at the return of his son, whom he believed had been lost to him forever.

“Meanwhile the older son was in the field. When he came to the house, he heard music and dancing.”

Luke 15:25

The people of Israel celebrated in the streets at David's success in defeating the Philistines.

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres.

1 Samuel 18:6

Can our bodies be a joyous symphony in praise and glory to God? Our Lord, our Creator, bestowed this vessel upon us—our body—as a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. With balance and harmony, the many dimensions of health can come together into a symphony of beautiful music with Jesus as our conductor.

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

Psalm 98:1–6

THE BIBLE IS OUR GUIDE

The Bible provides us with powerful insights to guide us on our journey toward wellness. According to Howard Stone and James O. Duke in *How to Think Theologically*, “scripture is both a historical record of God’s people and the early Christians and “a message from God—the Word of God.”³ Thus, as we seek guidance from the Bible, studying the “Word of God,” we discover insight into many issues that directly affect our health as God’s Word supports us to seek the pathway to a healthier lifestyle.

Reading the Bible also helps us understand the meaning of our faith, but we must be careful of “proof-texting” (picking and choosing specific scripture to support one’s own views); it is important to look at the message of the Bible *as a whole*.⁴

Love is a major theme throughout the Bible—God’s love for His people, His call for His people to love and worship Him, the gift of sacrifice and grace shared by Jesus because of His great love for us, and our commandment to love one another. We love our families, and our families love us, and we want to be as healthy as we can for them. We are called to serve God and witness for Jesus, and we can better do that task if we are as healthy as God meant for us to be. We are commanded to “love

one another” (John 13:34–35), and we can more easily accomplish that task if we are in good health.

Honoring God with My Body is about love. Throughout our study together, you will acquire knowledge to help you make healthier lifestyle choices. We know that God loves us with a powerful and everlasting love. That love will guide us as we seek to improve our health—to honor God with a healthy temple to house the Holy Spirit.

Each of us is in a different stage of our walk of faith, as well as our journey toward wellness, but I pray you will join me on the overarching pathway to better health.

ORGANIZATION OF OUR STUDY

This Bible study's themes are divided into weekly topics with consistent emphasis on wellness. I warn you, there is homework! I pray you will complete the daily readings, answer brief questions, and complete your weekly reflections. Your participation during the week will enable you to pray for each other and prepare you for the weekly meetings during which further information is shared.

You can complete the Bible study individually or with a partner; however, meeting with a group offers you additional support as you work toward developing healthier habits. Within the group setting, your leader will highlight important points from the week's readings, guide discussions with questions and reflective responses, and provide additional information to encourage healthy lifestyle choices. Participants are encouraged to pray for each other during the week, and weekly group meetings provide additional opportunities for members of the group to offer support to each other.

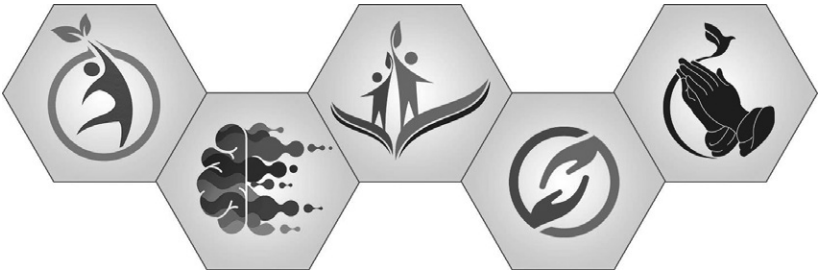
If you have questions for me, my contact information is at the end of this book. I'll be praying for you!

Wishing you blessings on your journey to wellness,

Katherine

WEEK TWO:

God Loves You



Goals for Week Two

1. Remember that God created us and considered this aspect of His creation to be “**very good.**”
2. Recognize God loves us and has a plan for our lives (which includes being healthy).
3. Examine the barriers we face on the road to good health.
4. Discuss the importance of fruits and vegetables (and eating more of them).
5. Look at our past doubts and fears—identify them, hash them out (if needed), give them to God, and *move on!*

GOD, OUR CREATOR, LOVES US

In the book of Genesis, God's process of creating our Earth and human beings (us!) is described.

On the first day, God created light:

God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:4

On the second day, God created the sky:

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ... God called the vault "sky."

Genesis 1:6, 8

On the third day, God gathered the water to certain areas so that dry land would appear:

God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:10

And he created plants:

The land produced vegetation ... And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:12

On the fourth day, God made two great lights:

God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:17–18

On the fifth day God created creatures of the sea, birds, and animals on land:

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems ... and every winged bird ... and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:21

God made the wild animals ... the livestock ... and all creatures that move along the ground ... and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:25

But, on the sixth day:

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

Each day of God's Creation, *it was good*, but on the sixth day, when God created humans, *it was very good*.

We have only to look around at God's Creation to know how amazing and awesome the Earth is, yet when humans were created, it was *very good!* We are very special to God.

DAY 1

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:11–13

Both the Old and the New Testament Christian Bible are filled with references of God’s great love for us. Perhaps the greatest example of this love is the gift of His Son. Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 3:16–17

But despite being told numerous times that God loves us, don’t we still have doubts and fears? Don’t we profess belief in God’s love for all

people, but sometimes wonder if He is really concerned about our day-to-day lives?

What is one problem or concern in your life that you label as too trivial for God to worry about?

Please read Psalm 18:16–19.

Isn't it amazing to know that God delights in us?

I know that, like mine, your blessings are too numerous to count, but take a moment to list at least five things you are thankful for.

Our Prayer: Father, it is so wonderful to know that you delight in me. It humbles me to know but fills me with great joy. I pray for everyone in this Bible study—that you will guide us to better health, so we might better serve you.

DAY 2

Jesus prepared His disciples before sending them out to witness. One of the messages he shared was of the Father's great love for them.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Matthew 10:29–31

The good news is that God loves us, just as He loved the disciples. It's also wonderful that God knows us—every aspect of our lives—*and* loves us anyway! Yet it can be terrifying to realize that God knows everything about us—all the down and dirty, our secrets, our sins, our jealousy and covetousness, our bad habits, and more. God knows it all. But that's okay, because that gives us the freedom to turn everything over to God and seek His guidance in making changes that will help us on our road toward wellness.

In this Bible study, we're not going to share all our deep, dark secrets. We don't need to know each other that well! However, since this is a jour-

ney toward wellness, it is time for you to examine some of the barriers you face on your path to better health.

We'll talk in the weekly meeting about heredity (what we get from our parents) and environmental influences (the choices we make that affect our health). Some aspects of our health are beyond our control, but other choices we make have a serious impact on our health. We're not planning to solve these issues today (we will work on them later), but the first step is to identify our health issues, bad habits, and health-risk behaviors that negatively impact our wellness.

So, be brave and list a few things you do that you know are not good for you.

Our Prayer: Father, I pray for the courage to recognize unhealthy behaviors and habits that are keeping me from embracing life to the fullest. As we all seek the journey to better health, we pray for your strength, guidance, and encouragement.

DAY 3

Please read Psalm 139 in its entirety.

Now let's review verses 13–16.

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. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

When we think about the human body, we recognize that we truly are “**fearfully and wonderfully made.**” It's so amazing that we can see, hear, smell, taste, touch, move, think, speak, love—we can do so many awesome things! We are God's most treasured creation.

Please read Genesis 1:27–30. In these verses, we are reminded that we are created in the image of God, that God has given humankind dominion over the world, and that God gifted humankind with “every green plant for food.”

Meat eaters are probably worrying, “Oh, no! She’s going to try to turn me into a vegetarian or a vegan.” Don’t worry, the Bible doesn’t suggest that we should never eat meat; however, God is obviously giving us the message that food from plants is good. We will discuss the importance of fruits and vegetables (and the way they are prepared) in the group meeting. For now, please list some fruits and vegetables you enjoy.

Nutritionists recommend we eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables (prepared in a healthy way) every day. For the next few days (until the group meeting), please keep a log of how many servings of fruits and vegetables you eat each day. A serving is half a cup, a medium-sized piece of fruit (apple, banana, etc.), or one cup of fresh, leafy greens (like lettuce or spinach). Fresh or frozen are healthier choices, followed by steamed (if cooking is desired). Try to avoid canned produce because of the high sodium content. Butter, salt, sugar, rich sauces, or frying can negatively affect the nutritional quality of food.

Our Prayer: As your creation, we are blessed in so many ways. We pray for guidance and perseverance in our quest to eat healthier fruits and vegetables, your gifts to us.

DAY 4

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:5

We all carry around doubts and fears—baggage from past failures.

Perhaps we attempted to take steps toward better health in the past (dieting, an exercise program, cutting out sodas, etc.), but we failed. We've been unsuccessful in changing bad habits and accepted that we're just going to live with our state of health. Or worse, we haven't recognized how those bad habits can be deadly.

Please bear with me as I share some statistics you may not want to hear.

- Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States.
- Heart disease and cancer account for 48 percent of all deaths.
- Obesity is a serious concern in the United States and contributes significantly to the development of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.⁵

Chronic disease can be caused by health-risk behaviors, and heredity is also a contributing factor. Health-risk behaviors are those we can change. Examples are:

- Poor nutrition
- Lack of regular physical activity
- Tobacco and alcohol use

We'll go into more detail about specific health-risk behaviors later in our study.

Now let's think about that baggage we may be carrying around that might lead us into some of these dangerous choices. Are you practicing any of the following risky behaviors: unhealthy eating, lack of exercise, smoking, etc.? You may want to journal about this on a separate page or on the reflection page at the end of this week. I encourage you to examine your feelings, dig deep for root causes, write them down, give them to God, pray for guidance, and most importantly, don't pick up the burden again!

Our Prayer: Father, we know we are created in your image—that you love us and want us to be healthy, not only to be in service to You but also to live a life of joy.

DAY 5

Yesterday may have been a tough day for you after I asked you to examine the baggage you carry around—things that have occurred in your life that have dragged you down and contributed to picking up bad habits that negatively affect your health. I'm praying for you! We're praying for each other!

Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed

all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 1:17–23

This letter is so rich with blessing and praise. And the most wonderful thing is that it applies to us—now! Biblical wisdom speaks to us and for us, just as it did when originally written. We can be assured that as God’s people (the church), we are under the care of Jesus (looking again at that last verse). We are part of the body of Christ. He lives in us!

Let us care for our temple (our body) in which our Lord resides. Eat your fruits and vegetables!

Prayer: Father, I pray for each member of our group—that we can bring our burdens to you, leave them there, and accept your strength and encouragement to guide us on our journey toward better health.

REFLECTIONS ON WEEK TWO: GOD LOVES YOU

How does knowing about God's great love for you make you feel?

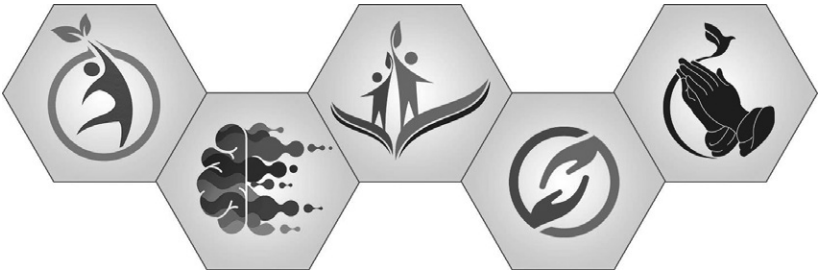
On Day 2, you listed some of your unhealthy behaviors. Have you thought of any more you wish to admit?

If you wish, journal about the burdens you carry around. Write a letter to God describing those burdens and lay them at His feet. He doesn't promise to remove our trials, but he will be with us on our journey.

Have you been able to add fruits and vegetables to your daily meals? Are they eaten fresh or prepared with minimal fat and salt?

WEEK THREE:

Loving Ourselves and Others



Goals for Week Three:

1. Recognize and be thankful for the awesome gifts of our loving God.
2. Continue to affirm God's love for us.
3. Pray for each other on the journey toward healthier lifestyle choices.
4. Identify challenges and stressors in our lives.
5. Select one lifestyle change to make that will contribute to a healthier you.

GOD DOES NOT MAKE JUNK

Last week we focused on God’s amazing Creation—not just the Universe, the Earth, but *us!* When God made us, it was **very good**. We are “**fearfully and wonderfully made**,” and God *loves* us.

What is our response to this awesome gift?

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Psalm 107:1–9