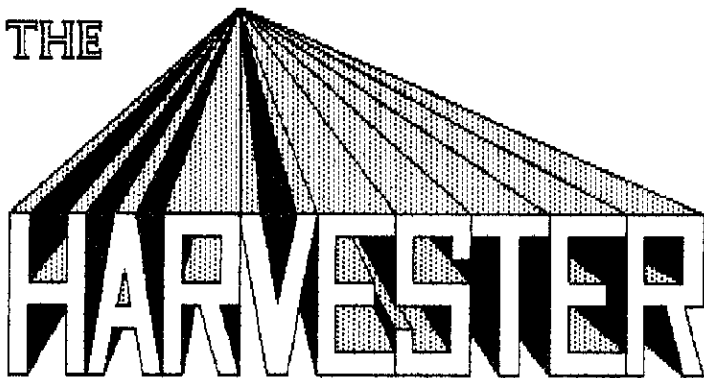


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

JULY 1999

No. 163

BODILY EXERCISE

As servants of Christ, we are well aware that spiritual things are of the utmost importance. We should seek to be spiritually rich rather than to gain the riches of this earth (Matt. 6:19-21). We should always put the kingdom of God above all other kingdoms and authorities (Matt. 6:33). Our desires and our minds should be centered on heavenly matters, not on things of this world (Col. 3:2). And our hunger and thirst should be for the spiritual nourishment that comes only from God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2). Truly the Christian is a spiritual person, having a

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spiritual identity, spiritual responsibilities, spiritual values and spiritual goals.

But does this imply we are to totally neglect all physical matters and in particular, neglect our earthly bodies? Perhaps we should spend a few minutes to consider this obscure topic. For the last decade or two, surveys have shown that Americans are spending more and more time in front of the television set, wasting precious time and becoming lazy, pathetic "couch potatoes." Other surveys reveal that the number of unhealthy, overweight people in this nation is increasing (and this includes even our children). All of this seems to suggest that we are not taking care of our physical bodies like we should. Agree? Yet the real question is this: Should this be of any concern to the Christian? Does this relate at all to our religious life? Let us see what the Bible says.

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8) My friends, these are the words that the apostle Paul wrote to his "son in the faith." Notice that he told Timothy that spiritual godliness is useful in all matters. In fact, it is desirable for this present life and for the life hereafter. There is no question that spiritual matters should be the top priority in every Christian's life. But what did Paul say about the physical body? He informs us that there is a

"little" usefulness in "bodily exercise", didn't he? The applicability may not be much when compared to spiritual matters. Nevertheless, he did write that there was some benefit and some advantage to having an exercised body, i.e., a healthy body.

Brethren, we must ask ourselves today: am I taking good care of this earthly tabernacle (2 Cor. 5:1,4)? Am I getting enough exercise and eating properly for my health's sake? Am I doing the best I can to avoid all manners of infectious diseases? It may seem trivial, but God intended for his people to take care of themselves, not only spiritually but physically, too! (Consider all the sanitary laws which God gave to the Israelites during the time of Moses.) God wants us to nurture and cherish these "earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7) so that we may be able to physically carry the treasure of the Gospel to all the world (Matt. 28:18). Brethren, are we in good enough shape such that our feet can actually carry us to our neighbor in order to preach the Good News? For example, can we walk a mile right now and not be short of breath? *"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom. 10:15)

In 1 Cor. 3:16 Paul asked a question of the Corinthian saints which needs to be directed at us today. *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* If we

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think of our physical bodies in this manner, it should emphasize all the more the importance of physically caring for ourselves. That means we should NOT degrade God's temple (our body) with street drugs or the depressing influence of alcohol, with cancer-causing agents such as nicotine (smoking), with an overabundance of fatty tissue and artery-clogging cholesterol, or with any other element that will shorten the intended life span of God's most beautiful creature -- YOU! The Lord wants you to "*present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*" (Rom. 12:1).

When a person joins the military force, the first item on the agenda is called "basic training." During this period the inductee spends a few intense weeks learning about authority and teamwork. These are usually the key for a successful campaign. But another aspect of basic training involves performing various exercises and calisthenics for getting the body into "shipshape." Although victory does not always go to

the team in best physical condition, having a regiment of healthy soldiers does increase one's opportunities for winning. Likewise, the Christian is called upon to fight for the Lord's army. And though *"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Eph. 6:12), there is some advantage, however slight, to being physically fit for the Lord's work (Eph. 6:15). Just like Paul said, *"bodily exercise profiteth little."*

Christians must always remember to be spiritually minded in all things (Rom. 8:6) for that is what counts the most! But as we grow towards maturity and completeness, let us not neglect our physical health. Let us follow the example of Jesus who *"increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"* (Luke 2:52). Let us acquire every benefit available, even that which can be gained through *"bodily exercise."*

RAY McMANUS

How foolish we are to blame God
for the harvest after we have
done the plowing, sowing, and
reaping.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who was David's firstborn son?
2. How many days did Ezekiel sit among the exiles by the river Chebar after the Lord spoke to him?
3. What is one to look for when Christ returns?
4. According to Psalms 107, what does God do for the longing soul?
5. What did Samson eat on his way to his wedding?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. How many times per day did the armed men of Israel march around Jericho on the first six days of siege? ONCE (Josh. 6:14)
2. Who does God tempt? NO ONE (Jas 1:13)
3. According to Romans 13, what debt should remain outstanding? TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 13:8)
4. Name four of the five feasts or festivals mentioned in Numbers 28 and 29. PASSOVER, FEAST OF WEEKS, FEAST OF TRUMPETS, FEAST OF TABERNACLES, AND DAY OF ATONEMENT (Num. 28 & 29)
5. According to Deuteronomy, a man was NOT to plow with what two animals yoked together? OX AND AN ASS (Deut. 22:10)

“KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH!”

Brother Ken Cobb presented a very interesting thought in one of his lessons recently [Aug. 1998]. The thought came from the place where he worked before he retired. It was a slogan from a safety campaign -- “Knowing is NOT enough!” The meaning of the slogan was that simply knowing about safety was not enough to protect someone. Putting that knowledge into practice was essential to having a safe work environment.

Certainly we can relate the same slogan to our religion. We can know many things about God’s word, but unless we put them into practice in our lives, they do us no good!

“The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”
(Prov. 15:2)

“...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.”
(1 Cor. 8:1-3)

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” (Jas. 4:17)

These verses reiterate the same thought - if we would be wise, we must use “aright” the knowledge we have; to simply have knowledge and not to use it is sin. Remember -- “Knowing is NOT enough!” Let’s put into practice those things we know.

CHAD PRINCE

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 12 - 16	Becton Church Becton, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 14 - 18	Fayetteville Rd. Church Fairburn, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 18 - 23	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL 7:00 evenings	Alan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
July 25 - 30	Rainsville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 25 - 30	Napoleon Church Woodland, AL 7:00 evenings	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Aug. 6 - 8	Fairview Church Oxford, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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If life gives you a lemon, don't be afraid; just squeeze it real good and make a lemonade.