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## MATURING TOWARD WHOLENESS IN THE INNER LIFE

### Chapter Seventeen

#### **With All Your Strength—The Body**

*Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are not your own.  
So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

1 - In considering the five components of the human person Jesus referred to in Mark 12:29-31, we now come to strength (the body). It too must be re-formed.

2 - Our body is the one component of our person that is physical. It locates us in the material creation. We are spiritual beings who have physical bodies.

3 - Life in a rebellious, darkened, material world has negatively impacted my body. This in turn has affected my heart, soul, mind and personal relationships.

4 - We must avoid all attitudes of body-hatred. The wrong that resides in our bodies is not the fault of our bodies. It was caused by the impact of sin upon our bodies.

5 - God created the human body good (Genesis 1:31). When the second Person of the triune God came to earth, he took on a human body (Hebrews 10:5).

6 - In a human body, Christ:

- bore the consequences of our sin (1 Peter 2:24)
- was raised from the dead (Luke 24:39)
- will come again (Acts 1:11).

7 - How did wrong enter our bodies? A vital feature of the human body is the capacity to learn behaviors and then store them. This makes human life work.

8 - Countless behaviors are stored in our bodies: how to tie our shoes, speak a language, engage in a sport, drive a car, do our job, relate to others.

9 - At first, this learning happens consciously—we have to think about it. Then it is gradually stored away and becomes habitual. We access it subconsciously.

10 - Our problem: Our bodies can learn and store away habitual behaviors that are unlike God and therefore damaging to us and others.

11 - “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions” (Romans 6:12). My body was not created with sin; it learned sin.

12 - How does sin “reign” in my body? Through sinful behaviors I have learned, stored and now habitually practice. How can this “reign” be broken?

13 - Three processes shape the re-formation of my body:

- I take steps to retrain my body.
- I trust the Holy Spirit to transform my body.

- I honor and care for my body.

**14 - I take steps to retrain my body:**

- I unlearn destructive behaviors.
- I replace them with behaviors I learn from Jesus.

15 - “Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness” (Romans 6:13a). “Members” certainly includes bodily parts.

16 - What if at times I simply do not have the ability to avoid presenting my members for unrighteousness? This was true even of Paul!

17 - “I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (Romans 7:23).

18 - This points us back to some of the previous chapters we have studied, such as Chapter Eight: Spiritual Practices.

19 - I choose spiritual practices, not to punish myself (or my body!), but to open myself to God. I learn them from Jesus and Judeo-Christian fathers and mothers.

20 - An example of how spiritual practices can support the re-forming of my body is the effect of fasting from food. Jesus taught it. Jesus practiced it.

21 - What benefit does voluntarily, temporarily, fasting from food have? I learn that I am not required to give in to every demand of my body.

22 - A mega-theme in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles is that new life comes forth from death. Paul wrote that he died every day (1 Corinthians 15:31)!

23 - Why would anyone choose to die every day? In order to exchange what is damaged for what is new and deeply desirable. This includes the body.

24 - “Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (2 Corinthians 4:10).

25 - But the re-training of the body is certainly not all negative. Key to understanding the biblical teaching on death: death is the pathway into life.

**26 - I trust the Holy Spirit to transform my body.** “Present yourselves to God” (Romans 6:13b).

27 - This is primary. We present our whole being to our Creator. We went away from him. We suffered the consequences. We now accept his invitation to return.

28 - Learning how to present ourselves to God takes us back to Chapter Five: Practicing God’s Presence. Living in God’s Presence, I am transformed.

29 - Presenting my whole being to God includes presenting my bodily members to God (Romans 6:13c). This may require healing. See Chapter Seven: Inner Healing.

30 - Saying “No” to destructive bodily behaviors, and saying “Yes” to presenting my members to God—this is what obedience is.

31 - “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13).

32 - Obedience is teamwork between heart and body. Heart decisions find expression in bodily actions, even if these actions seem hard at first.

33 - Obedience is teamwork between my choices and the Spirit. I choose to learn to obey. I follow spiritual practices. I rely on God. The Spirit re-forms my body.

34 - Motivation to obey grows stronger as the fruits of obedience become sweeter. The ultimate fruit: A life characterized by the experience of God’s love!

35 - Jesus: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (John 15:10).

36 - **I honor and care for my body.** Contrary to punishing my body, I honor my Creator by honoring the body he made in the areas of rest, food, stress and medical care.

37 - Rest. I am responsible to give my body the rest it needs. How much physical illness is caused by stressed-out bodies driven by chaotic souls?

38 - A rested body is a vital pre-requisite for practicing God’s Presence. It is hard to focus on God when I am falling asleep.

39 - Rest is central to the principle of Sabbath. God worked. Then he rested. We are to do likewise. God invites us to enter with him into rest (Hebrews 4:9-11).

40 - Food. I am responsible to give my body the food it needs—not too little, not too much, and the kinds of food that will nourish, strengthen and protect it.

41 - Stress. I am responsible to moderate the call of compulsivity-driven activity all around. Much stress is inflicted on the body by a striving for significance.

42 - Medical care. I am responsible to take the medical needs of my body seriously and make provision for their care. Denial is not an effective response.

43 - “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:24-25a).