

Lord of Our Body Temples



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:16, 17; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.*

Memory Text: “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, NIV*).

Key Thought: Our bodies are not disposable containers we can use and abuse according to our own desires. As trophies of God's grace, redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should honor God with our bodies. The question is, How do we do that?

You are the temple of the living God. When the apostle Paul first mentioned the word *temple* to the inhabitants of Corinth, they did not think of their own bodies; rather, they thought of the temple of Aphrodite, a place where worshipers engaged in sexual immorality with temple prostitutes. That's probably why in his letters to the Corinthians Paul goes to great lengths to reeducate the new believers concerning the temple where God dwells, which is in the hearts of those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Paul declares, “You are the temple of the living God” (*2 Cor. 6:16, NKJV*), and “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor. 6:19, NKJV*). Thus, the most compelling reason to care for our bodies is not simply that we might extend our lifespan or enjoy better health now, but because we choose to honor God with our bodies, which are His gifts to us.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 27.*

All Things Were Made by Him *(John 1:1-3).*

The New Testament writers boldly proclaim that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Messiah, the Son of the Highest, but He is also the Creator of the world. Thousands of years before the Son of God entered into humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, He spoke the world into existence.

What three claims about the Word who became flesh does the apostle John make at the beginning of his Gospel record?

<i>John 1:1, 2</i>	
<i>John 1:3</i>	
<i>John 1:4</i>	

The apostle Paul also emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus Christ, Son of God, as the Creator of all things, and the One from whom we have even our life. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God, Paul writes, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (*Col. 1:16, 17, NIV*).

Compare John 1:1-4 with Colossians 1:16, 17. How do they complement each other? What’s the key message of both?

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ never explicitly claimed to be the Creator of all things. However, as we study His life and teachings, we find many evidences that point to His creative power. For example, when Jesus calmed the storm on the sea of Galilee, the astonished disciples exclaimed, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!” (*See Mark 4:41, NIV*).

With the few texts we read for today as background, read Genesis 2:7, the account of God making humanity. Notice the closeness, the intimacy, of the act, in contrast to how everything else in the Genesis account was made. What does that tell us about the basic meaning of our own personal existence, about who we are, about why we are here? What radically different conclusions can we draw about the meaning of our lives in contrast to those who believe we are products of pure chance, nothing more? (See also Gen. 1:26, 27.)

Key Text: *Romans 12:1, 2*

Teachers Aims:

1. To establish that God is the Creator and Sustainer of life.
2. To show that our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit.
3. To show that we honor God in caring for our bodies.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Creator and Redeemer (*Gen. 2:7, 22; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:16, 17*).

- A. What does the way in which God created humans tell us about the type of relationship He wants to have with us?
- B. How should we live, knowing that all things continue to exist through Christ?

II. The Temple of God (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20*).

- A. What is the price with which we were purchased?
- B. List the various aspects of our lives. Then discuss how each aspect should be affected by the understanding that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

III. To the Glory of God (*1 Cor. 10:31, 3 John 2*).

- A. Why is it so important that whatever we do be for God's glory?
- B. Discuss how the condition of our bodies affects us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. How can a person suffering from a serious physical problem maintain mental, emotional, and spiritual health?

Summary: God desires us to live as healthfully as we can so He can dwell in us through the Holy Spirit. Living this way glorifies Him and helps us to witness to others.

COMMENTARY

Lord of Our Body Temples.

Our spiritual lives are not separate from the lives we live in the physical realm. What happens to us in the physical realm and what we choose to do in that realm impacts our spiritual lives. The choices we make regarding our relationship with God impact our bodies. If we hear God calling us to become a vegetarian, to fast, or to lose some weight, and if we then respond to that call, our body will be affected. On the other hand, if we live within the physical realm as if such calls do not matter, bodily degeneration and disease will increase and limit our spiritual effectiveness.

God wants us to stop doing things to our body that have a negative impact on our spiritual lives. He wants us to stop overeating and start exercising. He wants us to start being faithful to our families,

Redeemed

In yesterday's study, we saw that the Bible very clearly reveals Jesus Christ as the Creator, the One who created all things, the One who spoke the world into existence, and the One who in a very intimate act breathed "the breath of life" into the first human being. Thus, we are not our own, in that we somehow created ourselves or put ourselves here out of our own volition, and, therefore, have an absolute claim over ourselves. On the contrary. As the objects of His specific act of creation, we belong to God, *whose claim over us is greater than our claim over ourselves.*

Read the last sentence of the above paragraph, specifically the italicized section. What are the implications of that thought? How should it impact how we live and the kind of decisions we make? When was the last time you made a decision based on the premise of that sentence?

We might belong to God because He is our Creator, but, according to the Bible, that's not His only claim over us.

Read the following texts. What are they saying, and how do they help us understand the Lord's claims over us? *Acts 20:28; Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.*

In the Bible, the idea of being redeemed is to be ransomed, to be bought back, to be recovered, to be rescued, or to be set free. Through Jesus our Redeemer, all these things have happened to us, which means His claims over us are even greater than before, for now we are His, by both creation and redemption. And redemption might even be a greater claim, because simply being created doesn't necessarily mean something good. After all, some people might curse their own existence and wish they had never been born. In contrast, as the One who redeemed us in an act that promises us a new existence in a world without sin or suffering, Christ has done something wonderful for us that nothing can diminish or destroy (*see Dan. 2:44*).

Write out a prayer thanking God for what He has done for you as your Creator and Redeemer. How, then, do you want to respond to Him because of what He has done? What obligations do you feel toward God, and what motivates you to fulfill those obligations?

and He wants us to stop working too hard.

But God also invites us to do things to our body that have a positive impact on our spiritual lives. These bodily actions include such things as worshiping and praising Him, and doing loving acts of service for others.

Our bodies do not remain passive against the choices we make for ourselves or the choices other people make that affect our lives. We can enlist our bodies on our side in the realm of spiritual warfare. While we are not able to do direct battle with spiritual forces on our own, we can use our physical form in ways that not only protect us from the forces of evil but enable us to go on the offensive against them.

Paul speaks of this in 1 Timothy 4:7, 8: “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (*NIV*).

How do we train ourselves to be godly? We do it in the same way we train to perform any skill. We practice. So, training ourselves for godliness is not a purely spiritual or intellectual activity. You have to do something with your hands, arms, legs, and feet. If you are going to train yourself to play the violin, you must repeatedly move your fingers and arms to make certain motions in order to play the instrument well. You have to practice. Thus, if you are going to be godly, you have to practice godly acts continuously. You also need to understand you will not get it perfectly the first time you try it.

Certain spiritual exercises, called disciplines, performed in the physical realm, can have a profoundly positive impact on one’s spiritual life. For example, Sabbath keeping is a spiritual discipline. At God’s command (*Exod. 20:8-11*), we stop working and rest for 24 hours. We have faith that God will then continue in a special way to re-create His image in us. As a result, for one entire day we can be free from the busyness of our daily lives to devote in distinctive ways that entire day to God.

Other spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Christian meditation, and Bible study, follow the same pattern.

1. We act in the physical realm.
2. We act in the physical realm at God’s invitation and, at times, at His command.
3. We act because we expect Him to act in return.
4. The result is a twofold freedom. We are free not only *from* bondage to that which would ultimately destroy us, but we are free to respond to God in new and creative ways.

An example of this is fasting.

1. Fasting is a bodily action. When we do not feed our bodies, they let us know about it.
2. God, however, may invite or command us to fast, in order to

The Temple of the Holy Spirit *(1 Cor. 6:19, 20).*

In his first epistle to the Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul emphasized the importance of honoring God with our bodies. The Corinthian believers were facing some intense challenges. They lived in a city where sexual immorality was not only prevalent, it was encouraged. Satan was marring the image of God in unbelievers and believers alike. Promiscuity was not only plaguing the culture, it was permeating the church.

In Paul's discussion of the damaging effects of sexual immorality, what two reasons does he give for honoring God with our bodies? *1 Cor. 6:19, 20.*

Summarize in a few lines what you believe Paul is telling us with these two verses. How should these truths impact our lives in a practical, daily way?

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot use and abuse our bodies with careless indifference. Too often, people say, "This is my life, and I can do what I want with it." The Word of God challenges that self-centered philosophy. When Christians engage in harmful activity, they damage themselves personally and dishonor God publicly.

What are some other harmful activities that are inappropriate for those whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? *See Deut. 21:20; Prov. 20:1, 25; 1 Cor. 10:31.*

Honoring God with our bodies involves more than refraining from sexual immorality. Once we recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, this realization will affect every aspect of our lives. We will not only seek to avoid defiling our body temple with any substance or activity that is harmful or inappropriate. We will also actively seek to care for our body temple and involve ourselves in activities that honor God.

"What matters for the Christian is only the spiritual, not the physical." How would you, from a biblical perspective, respond to this claim? How do you understand the strong link between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of humanity?

give us freedom from a specific appetite or to help us solve a particular problem. Fasting only to get something from God or to earn His favor is worthless. Such communication is one way—from us to Him. But when we respond to God’s invitation, we are allowing Him to communicate with us, as well.

3. When we fast, we are not merely “mortifying” our bodies. Instead, we are quieting the clamor of voices in our inner being so we can hear God; and whenever God speaks and we respond, we become a bit more transformed into His image.

4. We find freedom from our cravings. We have learned to say No to our desires by saying Yes to God. Instead of being controlled

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *John 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31; 3 John 2*

1 The study of the human body leaves no doubt its creation was an act of genius, not chance. Reflect on each of the different systems—digestive, respiratory, circulatory, reproductive, skeletal, neurological, dermatological—and their interrelatedness. Regardless of the spiritual mandate to care for our bodies, simple logic tells us our bodies deserve the finest care possible. Why are so many of us clueless when it comes to the care and feeding of this magnificent machine? What simple habits have you adopted for maintaining optimal health?

2 We belong to God by virtue of creation and redemption. Our usefulness to Him is directly related to our mental and physical vitality. Yet, the enemy has often succeeded in turning Paul’s counsel, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NIV*), into an arbitrary, legalistic list of “dos” and “don’ts.” What can we do to reclaim the gospel of good health from legalists and extremists? Make three specific suggestions.

3 We live in a society that says “If it feels good, do it.” How does knowing Jesus as Lord help us order our priorities? What habits have you adopted or abandoned that show Jesus is Lord of your life?

4 Jesus was fun to be around. His enemies described Him as “ ‘a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners” ’ ” (*Matt. 11:19, NIV*), suggesting that He was not joyless and severe. Clearly, there should be a balance in the way we live and in what we eat and drink. What is that balance?

Do All to the Glory of God (*1 Cor. 10:31*).

Having appealed to the believers in Corinth to avoid defiling their body temples through sexual immorality, the apostle Paul shares a principle that can guide every aspect of life: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NIV*). The Greek noun translated “glory” is the same word used as a verb in 1 Corinthians 6:19: “Honor God with your body.” The correlation between these two passages is clear. Because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, everything you do, including what you eat and what you drink, should be done to the honor of God.

How possibly does one “honor God” with one’s body, or how does one eat and drink “to the glory of God”? What does that mean? How do these above texts show us that God does care about what we eat and drink? Why would He care?

We are physical beings. In the new heaven and the new earth, we will still be physical beings (*see Rev. 21:4, 14*). The idea that we are temples serves to prove even more so how sacred, and important, the physical aspect of our being is. No wonder, then, we are admonished to take care of ourselves, to use our bodies in ways that glorify the One who made them. Any kind of physical indulgence, any kind of bodily sin, any kind of abuse of our body simply defiles what God has created and given us.

Also, if God loves and cares about us, then it should be no surprise that He wants us to take care of our bodies, which can be a source of much joy or so much suffering, often depending upon how we ourselves take care of them.

What do the following texts say about God’s attitude regarding our physical well-being? *Exod. 15:26, Jer. 30:17, Mark 5:25-34, 3 John 1:2.*

Read these words of Ellen White: “Since the laws of nature are the laws of God, it is plainly our duty to give these laws careful study. We should study their requirements in regard to our own bodies and conform to them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 369. What is she telling us here? How do these words reflect the principle Paul gave us in 1 Corinthians 10:31?

by our impulses, we learn to put them under God's control.

Instead of being our enemy, our body becomes our friend. What we do in the body actually can enable us to hear God more clearly and act for Him more consistently. The more we practice godliness, the more we will reflect His goodness and love to the world.

Witnessing

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NIV*).

Because we have not truly made Jesus Lord of our lives, we tend to separate spiritual matters from our everyday lives. God has not called us simply to religious exercise. He has called us to a complete and total life transformation. This calls for nothing less than allowing Him to permeate every aspect of our lives—even the mundane.

In doing all things to His honor and glory, we are a witness to the transforming power of God. Never allow anything short of complete transformation in your own life, bringing everything into submission to God's will.

If you have a Christian bumper sticker or symbol on your car, are your driving habits a good witness?

Would we think twice about wearing a Christian T-shirt, hat, or other identifying factor, given some of the things we do or places we go?

As people see your life transformed, be sure to give the glory to God. And don't soft-peddle transformation to those you're witnessing to—God expects nothing less of their lives.

What is mentioned above are only those things people see, but even more important are those things no one sees but God. If our lives are not transformed even in the most secret places, this, too, will be apparent, for people learn early to spot hypocrisy.

We may understand prophecy, the 2,300 days, the significance of the sanctuary service, but if we are not living to His honor and glory in the everyday matters of life, these things are meaningless. Remember, most people would rather see a sermon lived than hear one preached.

Shalom!

Many people have heard of the Hebrew word *shalom*, understood as “peace.” It is sometimes used as an informal greeting among Jews today.

What do you think of when you think of the word *peace*? In what different ways do you use that word in your language? What does it mean to you?

The word *shalom* itself has a very rich and deep meaning in the Old Testament, where it appears in one form or another hundreds of times. It carries within it the idea of completeness, good welfare, wholeness, soundness, well-being, inner harmony, and health. The word itself incorporates every aspect of life, including the physical, mental, and the spiritual, whether individually, collectively, or nationally.

For example, in one of the earliest uses of the word, Jacob inquires about the well-being (*shalom*) of Laban (*see Gen. 29:6*). The word translated “well” both times in the text is *shalom*. In contrast, in Jeremiah 29:7, Jeremiah tells the Jews in captivity to pray for the *shalom* “of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away,” because, the Lord says, in the *shalom* of the city will be the *shalom* of the Hebrew captives.

Look up the following texts where *shalom*, in one form or another, appears. How does its use help us understand the meaning of the word in regard to our total health and spiritual well-being? *Gen. 43:28, Ps. 38:3 (the word translated “rest” in my bones is shalom), 119:165, Prov. 3:2, Isa. 48:22, Jer. 33:6.*

The Bible calls Jesus, *Sar-Shalom*, “the prince of peace,” which makes sense because, in Him, through faith in Him, through obedience to His law, both moral and physical, we can find “shalom,” wholeness, completeness, and well-being in our lives.

As Adventists, we have been greatly blessed with a health message. How seriously do you take the light we have been given on health? What changes might you need to make to have more “shalom” in your own life?

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: There is a profound sense of awe as we experience a birth and watch a baby take its first breath. John 1:3, 4 tells us that Jesus is the Source of life, even before a baby's first gasp of air. Share your experience with new life. Was it when one of your children was born or when you were a child and saw a puppy take its first breath? How did you feel? What does recounting that story help you remember about the God who originated life?

Thought Questions:

❶ Jesus' lordship of our lives is based not only on the fact that He is the Author of our existence. It also involves the profound gift of salvation. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ" (*1 Pet. 1:18, 19, NKJV*). How does Jesus' involvement in your rescue affect how you view His authority over your life and choices? How would you share the benefits of recognizing your value in God's eyes with a neighbor or work colleague?

❷ "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (*1 Cor. 10:31*). What if these words were emblazoned in neon lights over your pantry and refrigerator door? How do the words *to the glory of God* deepen the magnitude of their importance? Discuss in your class what it means to make decisions based on something broader than our own self-interest and desires. Practically speaking, how do we glorify God through our treatment of our body temples?

Application Question:

The concept of temple means a different type of structure in the vast variety of cultures on planet Earth. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 Paul tells us we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Consider how you respect your body temple as evidenced by your treatment of it. Consider what first step God will help you make to live a healthier lifestyle (suggestion: drinking at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day if your physician allows it). Covenant with God to begin this week.

Further Study: The message of health reform, honoring God with our bodies, has always been important for Seventh-day Adventist Christians. God provided much guidance on the topic of health reform through the ministry of Ellen White. It is our privilege to share this message of honoring God with our bodies with the world. “It is impossible to work for the salvation of men and women without presenting to them the need of breaking away from sinful gratifications, which destroy the health, debase the soul, and prevent divine truth from impressing the mind. . . . Let the poor have the gospel of health preached unto them from a practical point of view, that they may know how to care properly for the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 137. See also *Education*, pp. 99, 100; *Health Reformer*, October 1866; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 347, 348; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 17.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Since we are saved by God’s grace through faith and not by our own works, why does it really matter how we care for our body temples?
- 2 In what ways, if any, can you see a link between holiness and healthful living? Is that idea found anywhere in Scripture?
- 3 As a class, talk about what you might be able to do to help your own church members be more conscious regarding the need to take care of their bodies.
- 4 What dangers do we face in emphasizing the importance of health and its link to faith and spirituality so that we don’t make those who are sick feel as if they were somehow facing the judgment of God?
- 5 What role do dress and adornment have in the question of our body temples? What does Scripture say about this topic?