



The fourth in our series on 21st century 'Integrity' takes us even further into what we might think of as 'private territory' We are thinking about our bodies: how we look after them and how we use them. **Read 1 Corinthians 6: 12 – 20.** The only specific directive Paul gives in this passage is "Don't have sex with prostitutes". The rest is basic principles for living a healthy life and we need to work out what they mean for each of us individually: they won't mean the same for us all.

1. Why is 'Living Healthily for God' important? 1 Cor. 6: 19-20.

- It honours and pleases Him:
 - Our bodies aren't ours with which to do as we like. They are part of our whole person, for which God paid a high price, the death of His Son, to buy back. And now He's come as the Holy Spirit to live in our bodies.
 - A good host ensures the home is clean and comfortable; we need make sure our bodies are acceptable for God.
- God's purpose for us is to 'enjoy life to the full' and this is best achieved by looking after our health. God wanted the best for the Israelites, so there are numerous 'food and hygiene' laws in the Old Testament. [Just look at the headings to Levit. Chapters 11 – 15 and 17.] These laws weren't there to make life awkward, but for the welfare of the Israelites and the health of their community. Practical details may differ today but the principle is the same: God wants the best for us too.
- In His overall plan God has a job/role for each of us. If we make poor choices about our health or body care we could frustrate His plan and miss out on God's purpose for us.

2. Dawn and the Daniel Plan – a holistic approach to a healthier lifestyle.

- Feeling the need to get fit once her youngest son was settled at nursery school, Dawn came across the Daniel Plan which is a lifestyle program based on biblical principles with 5 key components: Food, Fitness, Focus, Faith and Friends.
- When you have God and friends helping you to make wise choices about food and helping to keep you focussed on exercise, you are much more likely to make positive changes and maintain them. God expects us to take care of ourselves
- There have been financial costs and Dawn doesn't claim to have cracked every food issue but the benefits have ranged from a deepening friendship with her friends, opportunities to witness to the staff at Holland and Barratt and lessons learnt in relying on God's power rather than willpower. It's about dedicating our bodies to God - who chooses to live in it.

3. Getting our priorities right. Matthew 6: 25 – 27.

- In 21st century Britain TV advertising, magazines, the cult of celebrity, health gurus and peer pressure are all pulling us towards an obsession with being thin, looking young or having big muscles. Does this matter to a Christian?
- Yes! Because it is a basic question of 'integrity' – are we worshipping our one true God, or are we worshipping our body? Are we trying to serve God as well as our body, our health and our appearance? Our body is 'a temple' it's not a god.
- Obsession in this area is bad for us: there are increasing numbers of young people suffering anxiety or depression because they are dissatisfied with their appearance and increasing signs and symptoms of people over-exercising. It can become disastrously expensive, wreck family life and make us unavailable for spending time with friends.
- At the other end of the time spectrum we have the medical advances that have improved our life expectancy hugely. But we have to accept that ageing and death are still inevitable until Jesus comes again. Most of us don't look forward to it.

4. Irene and 'ageing well'. (Ecclesiastes 12: 1-8 see below). *

- A congenital heart defect meant that by 2014-16 I felt I'd been precipitated into my 80s, and by-passing the 70s. I totally recognise the Eccles. passage and the experience has made me much more understanding of the challenges of ageing:
- **Frustration:** with things, people and with yourself. You get so slow and there's the senior moments, and the weariness. **What to do?** Recognise frustration as a subset of anger which is a destructive emotion that the Bible tell us to avoid. Learn to accept our limitations, to pace ourselves and recognise we are weak and vulnerable and ask for help. **Regret:** for the decline of things that really mattered to you: for me, my singing voice, for others a sport or a hobby. **What to do?** Stop competing and give way to the young. Work out what you are good at now and find something that fits the new 'you'. **2 Cor. 4: 16-18** reminds us that although we're crumbling outwardly, inwardly our spirits are being renewed day by day! Focus on the things that are eternal and rejoice in the Lord at every small triumph over adversity.
- **Most Important:** Look outward to other people all the time and keep practising hospitality: just a cup of coffee will do. Maintain a sense of humour and don't take yourself too seriously. Why worry? The Lord reigns!

Things to talk about:

If we really asked God what he would like us to do with our bodies, what would He say?

Can we see why the Jewish race is so strong and healthy when we look at their food & hygiene laws?

What do we make of the Daniel Plan? Is it different from any other food and fitness programme?

Pray for anyone we know in our family or friendship group with food or body dysmorphia issues.

*Ecclesiastes 12 v: 2 'it's one thing after another!' v: 3 wobbly legs, wobbly teeth, eyes get tired; v: 4 ears go muffled, wake up ridiculously early; v: 5 balance not good and (white) almond blossom = white hair! For 'meaningless' in verse 8 I hope it's OK to substitute 'transient' or 'temporary'.