

I Believe that I am Fearfully and Wonderfully Made:

The Pastor Cares for His Body



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Note about cover art: The image on the title page is by Chris Powers. It is his representation of Matthew 15:30, “They put them at His feet, and He healed them.” I chose it for the cover because it demonstrates the corrupted nature of our flesh and the power of Jesus to restore these physical bodies. Here is a section of Powers’ description of his work:

Any and all who cast themselves at Immanuel’s feet will find this “too-good-to-be-true” healing. Why? Because His feet are the feet of our Risen Lord and God, and yet they are also the feet that bear in themselves the wounds of all our sin, sickness, shame, and damnation. How beautiful are the feet of Him who IS the good news (Is. 52:7), the feet that still carry the scars of our death now transfigured into the emblems of our eternal life in Him.¹

1. Chris Powers, “Matthew 15:30,” *Full of Eyes*, <https://www.fullofeyes.com/project/matthew-1530/>.

It is good to start with the end in mind. When death comes, what is truly important becomes clear. The Last Will and Testament demonstrates who or what mattered most to the deceased while they were still with us. In the days leading up to death, the words of the dying are parsed and clung to. With that in mind, consider what we say about the human body at the time of death.

May God the Father, who created this body;
 May God the Son, + who by his blood redeemed this body together with the soul;
 May God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be his temple; keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.²

I'll admit, I haven't always considered the full import of those words. In my less than careful moments, I've downplayed the importance of the body when a mourner can't bear to watch the casket close. I've said it when asked about cremation. "This body is just a shell. That's not your loved one anymore." I don't intend it, but by how I speak, have I ever given the impression that the body is something less than a spectacular gift of grace from a perfect God for my good? Have I described the body as simply something from which our souls are looking to be free? Have you?

Now consider not just what you speak, but what you do. Does *this*³ look like I believe my body is a temple for the Holy Spirit, a special creation of my Creator, purchased by the blood of my Redeemer? Is *this* what it looks like to be praising God because I am fearfully and wonderfully made? Or does my activity demonstrate some other belief?

Reality check. When it comes to our "temples of the Holy Spirit," many of us act like we're trying to take Jesus up on his offer, "Destroy this temple," so that he can raise it up again. Of course, on the other end of the spectrum, some of us might be like the Pharisees swearing by the gold of the temple, valuing the temple more than the One being worshipped in it.⁴

In this paper, we will seek first to describe what we do believe about the body by working our way through the Creed. Then, we'll consider how that will impact how we care for our body. We will explore what it means that "I Believe that I am Fearfully and Wonderfully Made."

Brothers, I'll be honest. What I'm about to present is not anything new. My goal is simply to remind you what you know and pray that the Spirit help you apply it. I intend to give you plenty of words of those who have considered these things before. I needed their thoughts to guide my thoughts, because my thoughts have all too often taken this precious gift for granted.

2. *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 90.

3. To those without a visual of the presenter of this essay, let's just say there is reason the common response to hearing who was writing this essay was laughter. Still statistically obese even after losing 20 pounds as of the time of this writing, this presenter has always enjoyed hearty portions. I'm told that part of the reason for this presenter being assigned this essay was to communicate that the things discussed herein are accessible to all.

4. Matthew 23:16.

Part I

I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body...

So begins Luther's explanation to the first article of the Creed. "I believe that God created me and all that exists."⁵ We all confess this. I believe that God is the one that gave me this body, this gift of grace. Yet, it doesn't take teams of researchers and countless studies to figure out that we don't take care of our bodies quite like that is true.⁶⁷ Of course, teams of researchers and countless studies verify that assessment. Study after study shows clergy health as a problem.⁸⁹¹⁰¹¹ Making it worse is the evidence that

*"I praise you because I am
fearfully and wonderfully
made; Your works are
wonderful. I know that full
well."*

– Psalm 139:14

5. Martin Luther, Martin. *Luther's Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther*, ed. Stephen Geiger, Ray Schumacher, John Braun, and Joel Otto (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017), 130.

6. A bishop looking at the situation put it this way: "As for exercise and weight control, a quick glance around any gathering of clergypersons shows that most of the temples of the Spirit are out of shape and badly in need of repair," Herbert W. Chilstrom, "The Pastoral Calling from the Perspective of a Bishop," *Word & World* 1, no. 4 (1981), 337.

7. A note at the beginning. Obesity is not sin. Gluttony is. Gluttony often leads to obesity, but obesity is not always the result of gluttony. As we work our way through this paper, remember this: Care of one's body will lead to different apparent results in different people. Cherish what God has made you, and care for the body with which you've been blessed.

8. "In 2009 *Presbyterians Today* reported in their March issue ... In 17 years the average weight of pastors increased 11 pounds, from 181 pounds in 1991 to 192 pounds in 2008. The share of pastors who are obese doubled from 14 percent to 27 percent in that time period," Stephen McCutchen, *Clergy Physical Health* 4, n.p. (2018), 53.

9. "In 2008 we collected data that allowed us to compare the health of United Methodist clergy to that of a similar group of North Carolinians who weren't clergy. Most strikingly, we found that the obesity rate for clergy was 39.7 percent, compared to 29.4 percent of similar North Carolinians ... More recently, using 2014 data for both clergy and North Carolinians, we found that this obesity disparity still exists: 41.4 percent of clergy were obese versus 29.3 percent of comparable North Carolinians. When we combined the percentage of both obese and overweight clergy, this left only 25 percent who were of normal weight," Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byasee, *Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis: Faithful and Fractured* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 84.

10. "Across the board, clergy experience worse chronic disease than North Carolinians from similar demographic groups ... particularly high rates of diabetes ... joint disease ... and obesity," *Ibid*, 85.

11. In his doctoral dissertation for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Carl Muehler references Carrie Doehring's research in the article "New Directions for Clergy Experiencing Stress: Connecting Spirit and Body," found in *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 5. Muehler states, "Ideally, clergy should serve as an example to others as they take care of their bodies through proper exercise and nutrition. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Doehring notes that various studies have shown clergy to have at least a 10% higher obesity rate, as well as higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and arthritis," Carl Muehler, "Overcoming Barriers: Helping Navy Chaplains Understand the Need and Implementation of Self-Care," Doctoral Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (2019), 38-39.

we often live in denial about it.¹²¹³¹⁴¹⁵ In a 2019 article in *Pastoral Psychology*, Holly Hough et al. state:

The physical and mental health conditions of clergy are approaching crisis levels, with clergy experiencing higher rates of depression, obesity, and chronic disease than comparable Americans (Ferguson et al. 2015; Lindholm et al. 2016; Proeschold-Bell and LeGrand 2010; Virginia 1998).¹⁶

In his excellent 2011 essay encouraging our ministerium on this very topic, former seminary professor and current president of Martin Luther College, Rich Gurgel, summarized it well:

A recent extensive study of American clergy funded by the Lilly Foundation for Duke University's Pulpit and Pew research project revealed some statistics about pastors that encourage us all to break a sweat more regularly.

- 76% were overweight (compared to 61% of the general population).
 - 10% were chronically depressed (about the same as the general population).
 - 40% were depressed at times or worn out "some or most of the time."
 - The average minister worked 60–70 hour weeks with little or no exercise.
- (Quoted in "Firewall: Health Essentials for Ministers and Their Families," *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, Volume 6, Number 2, 311)

The recipe is well known to us. Start with the affluence of our culture which makes almost any food we want readily available. Add in America's addiction to fast-food. Mix all this

12. A study of Kansas Methodist clergy health compared to the state of Kansas demonstrated that clergy were more likely to report that they are healthy and less likely to be so. While they self-report as significantly healthier than their non-clergy counterparts, they have higher obesity and cholesterol levels than the general population. Greg Lindholm, et al., "Clergy Wellness: An Assessment of Perceived Barriers to Achieving Healthier Lifestyles," *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 1 (February 2016), 100.

13. Chuck Flunker's interview with 431 WELS called workers revealed 54% reporting as overweight. The real number is probably significantly higher.

14. Carl Wells' study of 883 clergy showed higher stress and poorer health, even with the limitations of his study, he describes: "Clergy ... are prone to having positive outlooks and hence may not report feelings and outcomes as openly as other professions," Carl R. Wells, "The Effects of Work-Related and Boundary-Related Stress on the Emotional and Physical Health Status of Ordained Clergy," *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 2 (2017), 113.

15. "This study suggests that, despite an urgent need for health interventions for clergy, it may be difficult to entice clergy to participate in health interventions given their optimistic view of their physical health functioning. Increased understanding of the discrepancy between high clergy disease rates and better perceived clergy physical health functioning is needed," Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Sara LeGrand, "Physical Health Functioning Among United Methodist Clergy," *Journal of Religion and Health* 51, no. 3 (2012), 742.

16. Holly Hough, et al., "Relationships between Sabbath Observance and Mental, Physical, and Spiritual Health in Clergy," *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 2 (2019), 187. The authors of the article go on to say, "Clergy leaders are looking for ways to improve clergy health, and these ways will require behavior change on the part of clergy. Behavior change is very difficult; it requires compelling cognitive reasons, which can be made easier if there are structures in place to support the change." More on this later.

with the sedentary nature of much of 21st century pastoral work, joined with a lack of exercise to compensate. Season to taste with the habit of self-medicating after long days by downing large doses of our favorite late-night snacks and/or beverages. Bake this concoction in the heat of the pressures of pastoral ministry. And out of the oven pops a dish that is giving more than heartburn to many North American clergy.¹⁷¹⁸

Who of us can't relate to the demands for desk time answering emails and crafting sermons, or the drive time sitting in your vehicle on the way to the hospital or shut-in call? Then add in the evening meetings and you see what he means by the "sedentary nature" of our work. Already 30 years ago, Herbert Chilstrom made the observation, "I'm convinced, on the basis of both my own experience, as well as that of pastors with whom I counsel, that many pastors are so neglectful of the care of their bodies that they cannot possibly fulfill the demands of their calling."¹⁹ If nothing else, a body in pain or discomfort quickly robs joy and excitement from ministry.

That's a problem. Too common is the temptation to neglect the care of our physical bodies. But this problem has its reasons, good reasons. In his conference paper on pastoral burnout, Pastor Robert Michel summarized some of them well, highlighting why we would get so caught up in our work. It is important and blessed work, and we care about the people entrusted to our care.²⁰ In Carl Muehler's doctrinal dissertation, he quotes Martha Teater with another reason:

17. Rich Gurgel, "You Were Ordained for a Life of Growth: Pursuing Ministry Excellence by the Gospel and for the Gospel," *Grown in Grace* Resource Packet (May 2011), 7.

18. This does affect us in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This past year, Chuck Flunker interviewed 431 WELS called workers about health and wellness and summed up his findings thusly: "As WELS called workers, we give and then we pour from an empty cup," Chuck Flunker, in discussion with the author, April 2021, based on Flunker's to-date unpublished research.

19. Herbert W. Chilstrom, "The Pastoral Calling from the Perspective of a Bishop," *Word & World* 1, no. 4 (1981), 334. Then, quoting Andrew Blackwood's *The Growing Minister*, "'The spiritual growth of a minister depends largely on what he does with his body.' He goes on to say that in our preaching we treat our hearers as though they are disembodied spirits, and in our personal habits we treat our own bodies as though they have no connection with our mind or spirit."

20. "I would suggest ... that Joe Average WELS pastor bears many qualities—and I mean qualities, not deficiencies—which would make him susceptible to burn-out.

1. Pastors are "in ministry". Their lives are devoted and dedicated to serving, – not tables or statistics, but people. And God. And God! Who can serve Him adequately, realistically, much less His people?????
2. They have "fire"; they are "on fire." They are not just humanistically motivated helpers; they are Spirit-fired.
3. They are committed to a cause. It is the cause of the Savior. It is the continuing pursuit of the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It's not putting a new roof on the shed by tomorrow night. It's building the Kingdom, and it's never done, never over, never finished, never completed.
4. The Pastor who is a pastor really cares. He is a Seelsorger. The secular social worker, or the pastor who views his position as a mere profession, can treat people as statistics or machines; to be fixed, treated, molded, or discarded. But we love them; love them, because our Savior loved them first.

“A possible barrier to prioritizing good self-care may be a dichotomy of our own making. We may feel that we must choose *either* meeting the needs of those we serve *or* taking care of ourselves.”²¹ Does any of this sound familiar?

Perhaps a review of what God does say about the body would help. I believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. With Job I can say, “Your hands shaped me and made me... Did you not ... clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life” (Job 10:8–12 NIV). With Luther, we confess, “I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind, and all my abilities.”²²

Or do I believe that it’s the body that’s weak, while the Spirit is willing?²³ Do I believe that life is so much more than the body, so I shouldn’t worry about that?²⁴ I’d rather clothe myself with the Lord Jesus Christ and not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (flesh).²⁵

These two truths are not mutually exclusive. It’s simply the challenge of walking the narrow Lutheran middle ground as we understand our God and His Word. The human body that is a gift of God is often described in the weakness with which sin has contaminated it. We are warned against following its desires when it is working in that unholy triumvirate (the devil, world and sinful flesh). Yet, the body, in its essence, is not evil. It is not even just

5. We understand that the essence of The Church is people; it is not program, not pew, not pious platitude. People—real alive people, with souls redeemed by the blood of the Lamb living in bodies sanctified by the Spirit as the temple of God.

6. We believe and are dedicated to the practice of the principles—100% perfect are those principles as God’s Word is perfect—as they apply to the duties and responsibilities of the ministry.

7. And we are idealists—we daily deal in “ideals”—worship every Sunday, every day; above and beyond the tithe; always forgive your wife; how to grow perfect teen-agers; do such good Greek and Hebrew exegesis that we have “all the answers.” Thank God our Seminary produces pastors who have all of the above qualities!! The questions is: can their/our idealism be tempered by reality? Can we dare we readjust our expectations?”

Robert A. Michel, “Pastoral Burn-Out: Fact or Fiction,” Paper presented at the *Metropolitan North Pastoral Conference, Wauwatosa, WI, January 1985*, 2.

21. Teater goes on to say: “Rather than accepting this false dichotomy of either/or, maybe we should choose a both/and approach. We can do good work with others *and* keep ourselves well and healthy. It may even help to reframe that false dichotomy into a logical order with which we approach our work. We can take care of ourselves first so we can then take care of others,” Muehler, “Overcoming Barriers,” 70. Martha Teater and John Ludgate, *Overcoming Compassion Fatigue* (Eau Claire: PESI Publishing & Media, 2014).

22. Luther, *Luther’s Catechism*, 130.

23. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Matt 26:41).

24. “Then Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes’” (Lk 12:22-23).

25. “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Rom 13:14).

neutral earth. It is the precious creation of God. Consider what Johann Gerhard²⁶ wrote, “As without hands God had fashioned the body of man, in like manner without lungs he breathed into it a created spirit. God’s breathing in the face of man actually means putting a living soul into his body.”²⁷ Then, the translator explains: “By ‘without hands’ and ‘without lungs,’ Gerhard means that both the created body and the inbreathed spirit of man are above the crude physical level.”²⁸

The blogger, Abigail Dodds, made the point this way:

Christians have incredibly good news for a world full of body loathers...God made you, and that *you* includes your body.

The Creator of all things chose to image²⁹ himself, to represent himself in this world, with embodied souls. It’s almost beyond comprehension. Why would God, who is spirit, create soul *and body*? Minds with thoughts attached to brains and neural pathways? Feelings connected to beating hearts and churning stomachs?³⁰

Our bodies are precious gifts. Lyle Luchterhand, in the People’s Bible Teaching on *Man*, writes:

A more accurate appraisal of our worth (more accurate than the extremes of worthlessness or pride) would be the value God assigns to us. The creation account in Genesis demonstrates that our worth before God is considerable. The order in which God created everything testifies to the importance of man. Each step in creation prepared for the next. All previous steps in creation were made in preparation for man.³¹

The intricacy and efficacy of the human body testifies to God’s goodness in this gift:

God demonstrated his love by giving us bodies that are unique and special among his creatures. Human hands are so adept and nimble that a concert pianist can play hundreds of notes in a minute. The human body is made up of more than six hundred muscles that

26. Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) was a prominent Lutheran theologian and writer.

27. Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man in the Writings of Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard*, ed. Herman A. Preus, and Edmund Smits, trans. Mario Colacci, Lowell Satre, J.A.O. Preus Jr., Otto Stahlke, and Bert H. Narveson (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 30.

28. *Ibid*, 30.

29. The point is not that God’s image is our physical body, but the honor God gave to humans, body and soul, by choosing to bestow on them his image. Northwestern Publishing House’s 2017 “Luther’s Catechism” gives this definition for the image of God: “The holiness in which Adam and Eve were created, and the fact that their wills naturally conformed to the will of God. The image of God was lost through the fall into sin, but it is restored through the work of the Holy Spirit,” Luther, *Luther’s Catechism*, 380.

30. Abigail Dodds, “What Does the Body Say? The Voice of God in Human Form,” *Desiring God* (September 2020), <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-the-body-say>.

31. Lyle L. Luchterhand, *Man: From Glory to Ashes and Back*, In “People’s Bible Teachings” (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1998), 47.

cross one another or are imbedded in one another, enabling a gymnast to perform amazing tumbling feats. The human mind is so versatile that no computer program has been developed yet that can perform all the mind's functions. Communication skills enable humans to share ideas and to learn what others have known before them.

Think of the human eye. When visual cells called rods and cones gather light, a chemical reaction takes place that sends messages to the brain by way of nerves. This creates the sensation of light in the mind and results in the three-dimensional pictures we see of the world around us. The eye has the marvelous ability to adjust its focus automatically according to the distance of the object it sees. It adapts to the presence of bright lights or darkness.

Or think of the human heart. In a year's time, the heart will pump about 40 million times without being told to pump. It knows when to pump fast and when to slow down. About four thousand gallons of blood pass through the heart daily. That is 450,000 tons in the average lifetime. The average human body has 75,000 miles of blood vessels. The heart moves that river of blood day after day and night after night without stopping. Though the heart is a very effective pumping machine, it weighs only about 12 ounces. No wonder the psalmist says to God, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful" (Psalm 139:14).³²

Ambrose³³ warns us, "the nature of the human flesh must not be despised, for it was worthy to enter into the substance and fellowship of the Holy Trinity through our Lord Christ."³⁴ Johann Gerhard spoke of the privilege given to the body of man created in the image of God:

Because the qualities of the soul were reflecting their light through the body itself, in the same way as the light of a candle shines through the skin of a lantern; and the righteousness and holiness of the soul were overflowing in the members of the body, and thus through the body man was showing his dignity and eminence over all inferior things. He was bearing in his countenance a kind of majesty proper to a commander, and hence he was acknowledged by the beasts of the earth as a master and lord.³⁵

Professor Deutschlander points out that "Adam and Eve were created with two essential attributes: they were created with body and soul."³⁶ Since that is true, he encourages us:

32. Ibid, 50.

33. Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan, was a prominent 4th century theologian (340-397).

34. Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971), 405.

35. Chemnitz, *The Doctrine of Man*, 51.

36. Daniel M. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds: The Splendor of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2015), 163.

We need to be aware of how closely connected the body and the soul are, as much as we need to distinguish between them. We make a point of that because of the common misconception that God is concerned with the soul and not with the body. In all of the Scriptures God shows his concern for the total person, consisting of both body and soul. Thus, Jesus performed miracles that benefited the body as well as the soul. On the Last Day the total person, consisting of body and soul, will stand before God for the judgment. While we need to distinguish between the two – and the distinction is very useful – we do not want to make it appear that only the soul is important or essential and the other unimportant and not the object of God’s special concern.³⁷

Why is this so important? It is too easy to fail to appreciate the goodness of God’s gift and fall off track. Think of the heretics’ handling of this concept. They got themselves into trouble when they failed to appreciate the human body as a good creation of God. In explaining Plato’s³⁸ discussion of the body and soul, Professor Heinrich Vogel summed up Plato’s view as “an antagonism to the body” on the part of the soul.³⁹ “In the body the soul lives as in a prison. However closely united, there can never be any true harmony between them.”⁴⁰ “The cult of Orpheus (the poet and musician of Greek mythology about 400 B.C.) regarded the body as the prison house for the soul.”⁴¹ Marcion⁴² and the Gnostics taught “that the flesh of man, as the material part of his being, is by nature inherently and unchangeably evil, simply because it is matter.”⁴³ The Manicheans, therefore, reasoned that “Son of God, the Mediator, who must be without sin, adopted only a likeness, that is, a specter or phantom but not the actual substance of human nature.”⁴⁴ Apollinaris⁴⁵ taught that Jesus had human body and soul, but his spirit was

37. Ibid, 163.

38. Plato (c428-c348 BC), Athenian philosopher and teacher.

39. Lyle W. Lange and Jerome Albrecht, ed., *Our Great Heritage*, vol. 2 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 218.

40. Ibid, 216.

41. Lyle W. Lange, *God So Loved the World: A Study of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 193.

42. Marcion (85-160 AD).

43. “Many of the Gnostics, but Marcion with particular emphasis, taught a view that goes by the name of Docetism, namely that the body with which the Savior was endowed was a phantom body, so that the suffering and death of Christ, while such in appearance, was not so in fact. This would then also imply that the Savior was not truly born, but only assumed a phantom body as a sort of an outer garb.

Finally, both Marcion and the Gnostics taught that the flesh of man, as the material part of his being, is by its nature inherently and unchangeably evil, simply because it is matter; that it can therefore not share in the resurrection, but must be destroyed forever as something which is beyond salvation. The resurrection was held by them to be an experience of which the soul alone would be capable, which the flesh could not share,” Lange and Albrecht, *Our Great Heritage*, vol. 1, 338.

44. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*, 52.

45. Apollinaris of Laodicea (d. 382 AD) was bishop of Laodicea and an opponent of Arianism.

replaced by the Logos.⁴⁶ At the time of the Reformation, Ulrich Zwingli⁴⁷ rebelled against the idea that the attributes of Christ's divine nature could be shared with the human nature. Remember *finitum non est capax infiniti*?⁴⁸

Heinrich Vogel's words of caution are valuable here:

It is important therefore to maintain an equilibrium between these two extremes of error, to cling to the scriptural truth that man consists of a body and a soul, both given him by a benevolent creator, both entrusted to his care, for both of which he is responsible to the God who made them, and both of which are intended for an eternity of bliss and joy in heaven. May the Lord grant us to cling steadfastly to the scriptural truth revealed in his errorless word concerning our souls, and preserve us, both body and soul, for a blessed eternity according to his grace.⁴⁹

In clinging to that scriptural truth, the authors of the Formula of Concord state it well in Article 1:

We believe, teach, and confess that there is a distinction between man's nature and original sin. This applied not only when he was originally created by God pure and holy and without sin (Gen 1:31), but it also applies to the way we have that nature now after the fall. In other words, we distinguish between the nature itself (which even after the fall is and remains God's creature) and original sin. This distinction is as great as the distinction between God's work and the devil's work.⁵⁰

Now, if God has given me the good gifts of both body and soul, if I truly am "fearfully and wonderfully made," how do I apply that? Consider the implications of what Charles Arand⁵¹ says, "The first thing we might say about God's human creatures is that God made us from the earth for life on the earth. We belong here."⁵²

46. "In the fourth century Apollinaris and his followers, believing that a human being consists of three parts, held that Jesus had a human body and a human soul but that in him the Logos took the place of a human spirit. In response the church insisted that what Jesus did not assume, he did not redeem (*quod non assumpsit, non redemit*). Citing Hebrews 2:17, "He had to be made like his brothers in every way," the church maintained that Christ took on the entire nature of a human being," Lange and Albrecht, *Our Great Heritage*, vol. 2, 448.

47. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Swiss reformer.

48. "The finite is not capable of the infinite," Lange, *God So Loved*, 256.

49. Lange and Albrecht, *Our Great Heritage*, vol. 2, 220.

50. FC Ep I:1, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Paul T. McCain, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

51 Charles Arand, Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

52. Charles Arand, "Back to the Beginning: Creation Shapes the Entire Story," *Concordia Journal* 40, no. 2 (2014), 138.

He explains further: "God did not create us as disembodied spirits like the angels. God made *Adam* from the *adamah*. To borrow from St. Augustine, 'our bodies are the earth we carry.' We are embodied creatures and our

Carl Muehler writes:

God has made each person with intentionality and designed each person uniquely through His bestowal of First Article gifts. God has appointed each person to love their neighbors (Matt. 22:39) through various vocations (roles and responsibilities). In order to accomplish this calling, it is necessary to take care of both the mind and body God bestows as part of His gifts in the First Article.⁵³

God made us and gave us a purpose. With the Psalmist we exclaim, “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?” (Ps 8:4). Even before considering the Christological impact of this prophecy, we stand in awe at what God has given us. He created us to “rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Gen 1:26). He has made us Christ’s ambassadors, “as though God were making his appeal through us!” (2 Cor 5:20). Consider that! He privileges us to use us, body and soul. We become *larvae dei*, gloves on God’s hands,⁵⁴ in our dominion of this earth and fulfillment of the tasks he gifts us.⁵⁵ How can we not go all in on that? We get Pastor Charles Spurgeon⁵⁶ when he says:

If by excessive labor, we die before the average age of man, worn out in the Master’s service, then glory be to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of Heaven ... It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living specimens of men in fine preservation, but living sacrifices, whose lot is to be consumed.⁵⁷

bodies bind us to the earth. Air flows through us as we inhale and exhale. We drink and perspire water. We ingest the earth with the food we eat. We are so bound to the earth that when we travel into outer space, what must we bring with us? Portions of the earth: air, water, and food. Without them we die. God made us living creatures.”

53. Muehler, “Overcoming Barriers,” 8.

54. “In speaking to his creation, God places his word into his creatures and enlists them as the instruments through which he works. He does this work ‘in, with, and under’ his creatures. Creatures become the gloves on God’s hands (*larvae dei*). In a sense, God enlists his creatures as ‘junior’ partners. And so, God works through earth to bring forth life (vegetation). He works through creatures to bring forth successive generations,” Arand, “Back to the Beginning,” 134.

55. Here again Arand describes it well: “It does not mean that everything exists for us to use however we please. Instead, dominion appears to be connected with the image of God. In other words, our dominion should mirror God’s own character and dominion over creation—and by extension, Christ’s own reign over creation. And when God rules, it is for the benefit of the ruled. Psalm 72 supplies a good example in which everything flourishes under the rule of a righteous king,” Ibid, 139.

56. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), an influential English Baptist preacher.

57. Cody Bobay, *SOULCON CHALLENGE: A 6 Week Special Forces Challenge for Men* (Gibborim Studios, 2016), Kindle, 277. A book that helped me lose 20 pounds in just a few weeks, before visiting my brothers and putting 15 back on. Although, truth be told, it was probably the check-ins with a friend who was also reading the book that were more helpful than the book itself.

He makes a powerful point, but please don't hear Spurgeon's words and find justification for not tending to our health. There's no way around it. Doing God's work includes care for our bodies. As Carl Muehler reminds us, "One's physical body is God's property, and there is no greater way to honor God and this gift than to take care of it."⁵⁸

In this, balance must be maintained. Here is Professor Gurgel again:

On the one side is becoming obsessed with physical health. Such obsession is often driven by an unbelieving world that is still searching for the fountain of youth as a way of denying its sin-induced mortality. While the Lutheran pastor is not immune to a narcissistic pursuit of health, more typically the challenge for us tends to be in the other direction. When it comes to caring for the needs of the temple of the Holy Spirit we call our bodies, a double theological distortion confronts us.

First, we must come to grips with the fact that self-care in general (spiritual and/or physical) is not sub-Christian or sub-Lutheran. How instructive it is to note that, in almost identical words, Paul urges the concept of paying attention to ourselves both to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28) and to Timothy (1 Tim 4:16) as he oversaw the Ephesian church. While there are legitimate times and places when bearing our cross means making our own needs secondary, to neglect regularly our own needs of body and soul may betray a deeper illusion. We may be giving in to a self-flattering messiah-complex that forgets that the role of offering body and soul for the sins of the world has already been fulfilled.... Bearing our God-given cross is one thing, fashioning our own martyr's cross from the self-created ruins of our health is quite another.... A strange 21st century Lutheran version of incipient Gnosticism is at work when we ignore our physical health. We are in danger of becoming strange modern reincarnations of ancient Docetists: scheduling our days and weeks as if we Lutheran pastors only seem to have a body.⁵⁹

Even in a perfect world, there was a balance of work and rest.⁶⁰ In God's perfect will for his people commanded in Exodus 20 there was work and rest.⁶¹ It wasn't until AFTER the fall, as a result of sin, that body-shaming ever happened.⁶² God was right to ask Adam, "Who told you

58. Muehler, "Overcoming Barriers," 22.

Muehler goes on: "Additionally, God has made people and given them physical bodies to perform tasks He has given them to do. He created us to be good stewards over His creation. Naturally, this would include taking good care of the bodies He has provided. Eating healthy meals, exercising, getting an appropriate amount of sleep, etc. are all important elements of self-care."

59. Gurgel, "You Were Ordained," 6-7.

60. "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Gen 2:2-3).

61. "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates" (Exod 20:9-10).

62. Notice the difference between Genesis 2:25, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame," and Genesis 3:10, "I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

that you were naked?” (Gen 3:11). The reality of our post-fall view of and care for our bodies is one that so often lands in one ditch or the other of sin,⁶³ whether your favorite ditch is pride or neglect.⁶⁴ Rarely, in caring for our bodies today, then, do we find the balance to the glory of God. Even in my motive. Taking care of my body is not just so that I can enjoy life more. Balancing my work and rest, taking care of the gift of the body God has given me, is not just a matter of being able to be more effective and get more done⁶⁵ It’s a matter of being who I am—God’s child.

So simple. Yet so often I fail. At this point, listen with me to our fathers in the Formula of Concord:

Here pious Christian hearts justly ought to consider God’s unspeakable goodness. God does not immediately cast from Himself this corrupt, perverted, sinful material into hellfire. No, He forms and makes the present human nature from it (which is sadly corrupted by sin) in order that He may cleanse it from all sin, sanctify, and save it by His dear Son.⁶⁶

63. Roy Oswald, in his classic *Clergy Self-Care* puts it in the perspective of the doctrine of salvation: “But at its core, the doctrine of salvation is telling us that the world has already been saved. Redemption is complete. For us clergy, this means we don’t have to save the world again, much less the people entrusted to our care. When I burn myself out in this ministry, it’s usually because I subconsciously believe that salvation is up to me, that somehow, salvation needs to be redone by me. What freedom comes when we realize that the task of salvation has been accomplished,” Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding A Balance for Effective Ministry* (Durham: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1991), 16.

64. In the People’s Bible Teaching volume on “Man”, Lyle Luchterhand describes it this way: “It bears repeating that an accurate estimate of human worth must avoid the two extremes of worthlessness and pride. Because we so often vacillate between such feelings, someone once suggested we should carry two stones in our pockets. On one should be written, ‘I am but dust and ashes.’ On the other should be written, ‘For my sake the world was created.’ When we are filled with pride, thinking we are God or we don’t need God, we should look at the stone that says, ‘I am but dust and ashes.’ When we are troubled by feelings of worthlessness, we should look at the stone that says, ‘For my sake the world was created,’” Luchterhand, *Man*, 47.

65. “The contemporary world tends to view rest as an ingredient in physical and psychological health and wellness, rather than a matter of moral character or spiritual discipline. In other words, rest in our culture has become primarily a matter of self-concern, instrumentalized again but this time in service to a worldly end rather than ultimate spiritual salvation,” William Schumacher, “Faithful Witness in Work and Rest,” *Concordia Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015), 143.

66. FC SD I:39, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*.

Part II

I believe in Jesus Christ, incarnate ... truly human.

I believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. How beautiful to be able to continue my confession. I believe in Jesus Christ, who was “incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became truly human.” In that body, “he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day” that very same body “rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.”⁶⁷ “It is the sweetest comfort that sin, which made its habitation in human flesh, was condemned in the same human flesh, in the person of Christ. Our body is the body of death, but in that same body of ours which the Son of God assumed from us, death was again destroyed.”⁶⁸

*“You are not your own. You
were bought at a price.
Therefore, honor God
with your body.”
– 1 Corinthians 6:20*

This body of mine that has been corrupted by original sin and that I continue to corrupt by my failure to treasure it rightly as God’s beautiful gift, this body of mine—Christ redeemed. That is the value this body holds. There are three parts to consider here: First, Christ so honored human flesh that He, infinite God, took it. Second, He demonstrated clear concern for the bodies of humans. Third, He redeemed human flesh, even raising it from the dead.

Let me borrow Martin Franzmann’s eloquence to introduce this section:

The whole Bible rings with glad praise of the Creator; the incarnation of the Son of God is God’s yes, in spite of all that sin has done, to His creation. He would not have sent His Son into the world if He were minded to take us out of this substantial world, as disembodied spirits, into some vague and insubstantial heaven of His own.

The ministry of Jesus was God’s yes to His creation spelled out in act; Jesus dealt with the body and the bodily ‘dis-ease’ of man. He fed and healed men, and he raised them bodily from death. He bade the sea which threatened man be still.

His resurrection was a bodily resurrection; the Jesus who spoke and ate with his disciples was no ghost. The promise of our resurrection is a promise of the resurrection of the body. We wait for a heaven and an earth that shall be a wondrously and unimaginably *new* heaven and earth. But the same continuity that makes the body of the future one with our present body connects the new unsullied world of God with the world we know, the world whose frustrate beauty makes us marvel still, whose futile workings still can testify to Him who once said “Very Good!” and will again say “Very good!” to all his hands have made.⁶⁹

First, “the incarnation of the Son of God is God’s yes ... to His creation.” Scripture is clear on this truth. Jesus has “flesh and bones,” unlike any ghost, even in his glorified state

67. Quoted from the Nicene Creed. Luther, *Luther’s Catechism*, 15.

68. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*, 55.

69. Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Commentary: Romans* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968),

(Luke 24:39). “Jesus of Nazareth was a *man* accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22). “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). He is the “Son of Man” (Matt 8:20), the “Son of David” (Matt 3:15), the “Seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:16), the “Seed of the woman” (Gen 3:15), the “Shoot...from the stump of Jesse” (Isa 11:1), “Firstborn among many brothers” (Rom 8:29). He was of the Jews “κατὰ σάρκα”⁷⁰ (Rom 9:5). He grew tired (John 4:6), experienced hunger (Mark 11:12), and sorrow (John 11:35). Jesus Christ took flesh. He lives bodily, with a human body. Let that sink in.

Cyril⁷¹ helps us ponder it:

The Logos attached our nature to Himself in order that first in and through Himself He might restore it to its pristine beauty, and that He as the heavenly man and the Second Adam, having been first of all established in righteousness and spiritual sanctification, might bestow on our race all good things through Himself.⁷²

The ancients prized and defended this truth:

Athanasius⁷³ has correctly said that for salvation the correct faith is necessary not only regarding the divine nature in Christ but also regarding the human. And Hilary⁷⁴ says that it is a matter of equal danger to deny either the deity or the flesh of the body in Christ Jesus.⁷⁵

Lutherans powerfully confess it:

The true teaching of Scripture is that the Son of God has assumed a true, complete, and total human nature which is of the same substance with us and possesses all the conditions, powers, and desires of our nature as its own normal properties, yet is not wicked, but is without sin, uncorrupted, and holy, but in which are the infirmities that have entered into our nature as the penalties of sin. He has willingly and without blemish assumed this for us in order that He might be made the victim for us.⁷⁶

70. “According to the flesh.”

71. Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD) was Patriarch of Alexandria from 412-444 AD.

72. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*, 468.

73. Athanasius of Alexandria (328-373 AD), bishop of Alexandria, theologian, church father, and defender of Trinitarianism against Arius.

74. Hilary of Poitiers (310-367 AD).

75. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*, 49.

76. Ibid, 49.

The incarnation is God's yes to His creation of our bodies. Then, "the ministry of Jesus was God's yes to His creation spelled out in act." First, Jesus took care of his own body, sinless, yet suffering the effects of sin. He worked seemingly ceaselessly, yet sought rest when needed.⁷⁷ He ate. He drank. He laughed.⁷⁸ All things the body needs.

Even more obviously, he cared for others bodily. Why heal the paralytic when he had already forgiven his sins?⁷⁹⁸⁰ Why give sight to the blind and strength to the legs? Why touch the leper when the Word would've healed?⁸¹ Jesus honored and restored this beautiful creation of God. True God "grew in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52). He "used his hands as a carpenter and his legs to walk from village to village. He touched the unclean and diseased, extending healing to a broken and sinful world."⁸²

The body is good ... fearfully and wonderfully made, and shockingly redeemed.

That, ultimately, is why Jesus took flesh, to redeem it. His body was not something to be defeated, but to be used in fulfillment of his purpose. Peter reminds us what he used to bear our sins. "He himself bore our sins *in his body* on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). John Piper says it well:

"And the Word became flesh." Why? So that John 6:51⁸³ could happen. He came to give his flesh. He came to give his flesh for the life of the world. He came to have flesh that could be pierced by nails. He came to have flesh that could be pierced with a sword and lacerated on his back and a crown of thorns pressed somewhere in the universe — namely, on the fleshy head of the Son of God — and cheeks that could be slapped around, and a beard that could be pulled, and eyes that could be spit upon so that the saliva would drip down. That's why he came. That's why he needed flesh: so that he would have something with which to die — something with which to suffer. That's the only way grace can come to sinners.⁸⁴

Jesus took flesh so that he could offer it as the ransom price for the sin of the world. Jesus' redemption replaces the value on the gift of our bodies.⁸⁵ Charles Arand explains:

77. Consider his sleeping on the boat in Matthew 8:24, and this account from Mark 6:31. "Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest'" (Mark 6:31).

78. At least it would seem so, considering he told John's disciples it was not a time for mourning (Matt 9:15) and was accused of having too much fun by the Pharisees (Luke 7:34).

79. Matthew 9:6.

80. Yes, his miracles also served the purpose of proving himself true God, but He could have demonstrated his divinity in many ways. He chose to care for real flesh-and-bones bodies.

81. Matthew 8:3.

82. Dodds, "What Does the Body Say."

83. "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

84. John Piper, "Why Did Christ Need a Body?" *Desiring God* (December 2020), <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/in-him-we-live-and-move>.

85. If you felt beat up after part I, read this sentence again.

Here article one of the Formula of Concord is particularly helpful. It maintains the goodness of God's work while rejecting the corruption that suffuses it. And because God valued it, he set out to reclaim it. The Son of God took on a human body. And Christ's saving work comes to us in elements of creation delivered by human creatures. God will finally raise up our bodies on the last day for life in a new creation.⁸⁶

This redemption of our bodies, then, is motivation for our care for our bodies. Paul asks us: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples 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 bodies" (1 Cor 6:19–20).

"Honor God with your bodies." We have our bodies so that we can give glory to God, so that we can do his work, so that we can enjoy his creation, so that "whether we eat or drink or whatever we do," we can praise His name (1 Cor 10:31). Taking care of these bodies makes it possible. I don't have to remind you of the difficulties we cause for doing that work when our bodies are shot and our energy short because we haven't prioritized regular maintenance of this temple. Previously I quoted 1 Peter 2:24. That passage goes on. Jesus bore our sins in his body for a reason, "so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.'" Our bodies have been redeemed for a purpose. We'll get to some practical to-dos on this in part IV, but right now, I want us to pause again and marvel – "I believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The Father created this body. The Son honored by his incarnation and redeemed by his crucifixion this body. Let's not forget what else we believe.

86. Arand, "Back to the Beginning," 142.

Part III

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church ... the resurrection of the body.

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church ... the resurrection of the body.”⁸⁷ As we proceed to the third person of the Trinity and consider what He says about our bodies, we highlight three truths. One, our bodies are his temple. He sanctifies these bodies. Two, God has placed us here in community with other bodies and souls in the Holy Christian Church. And three, thanks to the work of the Spirit, these bodies will be raised.

*“Do you not know that
your body is a temple of the
Holy Spirit?”
– 1 Corinthians 6:19*

First, the Spirit sanctifies us, body and soul. Chemnitz quotes Cyril again:

In his *De Incarnatione Unigeniti*, ch. 1, he says that “the Logos was made man in order that in Him the nature of man might be crowned again with the praises of innocence, and crowned with the Holy Spirit,” who will no longer depart as in the case of Adam but will remain in our nature, “and thus our nature will be conformed to God through sanctification. For the grace of God, which has been received in Christ, comes also to us because He is the Firstborn among us” and, as it were, the second Founder of our race.⁸⁸

As Paul writes, “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10). We use our bodies, God’s handiwork, to do those good works. Paul appeals to us in Romans 12, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your *bodies* as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Rom 12:1 NIV 1984). As we are constantly being renewed in knowledge in the image of our creator,⁸⁹ God blesses us with bodies to accomplish the good. To borrow a phrase from Professor Paustian in his podcast, God makes us “gospel wrapped in human skin.”⁹⁰ When people see our bodies and how we use them, may they see Christ.

In 2017, as the quincentenary of the posting of the 95 Thesis had made Martin Luther’s visage ubiquitous, I found myself in a discussion with a woman upon whose door I had knocked. Instead of the common Southern “What’s a Lutheran?” question,⁹¹ she had a slightly different approach. She told me she couldn’t be a part of anything associated with *Luther* because he couldn’t have been much of a Christian. I asked her where she was coming from fully expecting a

87. Quoted from the Apostles’ Creed. Luther, *Luther’s Catechism*, 5.

88. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*, 469.

89. Colossians 3:10.

90. Mark Paustian and John Wildauer, “Where Two or Three: Christian Conversation at the Table of Communication Scholarship,” 2019-2021, Podcast, PodBean.

91. Usually, that’s a great avenue to a law/gospel presentation. “Let me tell you what a Lutheran believes...” However, this woman felt she already had an answer based on what she had seen.

discussion of “*von den Juden und ihren Lügen*”⁹² or Luther’s “feisty” demeanor and scatological vocabulary. I got neither. Her reason? “He was fat.” If he couldn’t even control himself in how he ate, how much was the Spirit really living in him, she asked. I decided against responding, “Doesn’t that just mean he had more room for the Spirit?” and instead we got to talk about the stunner that God uses imperfect people to share his Word. Besides, there are other pictures that show him thin. We agreed that she was reading a bit too much into his appearance not knowing his whole story. Then I invited her to an upcoming potluck.

Hopefully, you see my point. Luther had too much flesh for this woman to believe that he believed he was fearfully and wonderfully made. I don’t think she would have bought the story we like to tell ourselves about the corresponding relationship between a pastor’s waistline and theological acumen.

Let’s just say this: As we are growing in our sanctification, an encouragement might be in order to consider care for one’s body in that growth. And while we’re on the third article, it is meet to consider the second phrase, “I believe in the Holy Christian Church.” We are part of community. This is not to be forgotten as we start to slide into applying this care for the body. The pile of health books I got to read in preparation for this all brought this out in one way, shape or form. We need each other as we live our sanctification.

There’s a reason in the body of Christ, “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ and the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Cor 12:21). The whole body of Christ is “joined and held together by *every supporting ligament*” (Eph 4:16). We are wired for community. What was wrong with the perfect man in the garden? He was alone.⁹³ Jesus, as our perfect substitute in another garden, Gethsemane, understood this need, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. *Stay here and keep watch with me*” (Matt 26:38). God blesses us through community.

The research bears it out. Benjamin Doolittle evaluated multiple studies and found that things like regular retreats, nurtured friendships and mentor relationships all correlate with lower levels of burnout.⁹⁴ Carl Wells reported the unsurprising finding that the more supportive a congregation was of its pastor, the better both the pastor and congregation scored on emotional and physical health.⁹⁵ Roy Oswald made the point that we are designed to need each other. His discussion of Bruce Reed’s “Oscillation Theory”⁹⁶ really rang true for me.

In that theory, Reed describes the need to oscillate between the two modes of Intra-dependence and Extra-dependance. Intra-dependence, he describes as “a state in which I depend upon internal resources to accomplish tasks important to me. In this state I am autonomous and

92. “On the Jews and Their Lies.” Luther’s 1543 treatise often cited to attack Luther as anti-Semitic. See Uwe Siemon-Netto’s “The Fabricated Luther” for a good response.

93. “God said, ‘It is *not* good for the man to be alone’” (Gen 2:18).

94. Benjamin R. Doolittle, “The Impact of Behaviors upon Burnout Among Parish-Based Clergy,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, no. 1 (2010). Notice 3 of the 4 things on his list all involved support of others.

95. Carl R. Wells, “The Moderating Effects of Congregational and Denominational Support on the Impact of Stress on Clerical Emotional and Physical Health Status,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 62, no. 6 (2013).

96. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care*.

self-sufficient.”⁹⁷ He describes Extra-dependence as “a state in which I am dependent upon a resource outside of me that I feel is trusting and caring, therefore allowing me to play, experience my essence, experience Grace or Sabbath time, or to just BE.”⁹⁸ He argues that spending too much time in either state is dangerous, and that, subconsciously, we realize the need. Many people see church as one of their times for extra-dependence.⁹⁹ They like to rely on the pastor to feed them and teach them and guide them. Our training and vocation have prepared us to be there for them, relying on the gifts and resources God has placed in us to help. Add to that the natural leadership roles in which we end up. So, we tend to spend a whole lot of time in Intra-dependence. Thinking this through helped me appreciate how very important Pastors’ Conferences and Circuit Meetings are, especially when I’m not presenting. It also explained to me why I so prefer those where the presenter presents and doesn’t ask me to do the work in group-work.¹⁰⁰ I’m wired to need to depend on others at times.

I believe in the Holy Christian Church. God has provided opportunities to be supported by others. So, Rick Warren’s *Daniel Plan* incorporates five essentials: Faith, Food, Fitness, Focus, and *Friends*. The *Soulcon Challenge* is designed to be undertaken by squads of men embracing the challenge together. Nelson Searcy’s *The New You* includes listing and enlisting your supportive friends and joining a small group at church. Because I believe in the Holy Spirit and what he does through the Holy Christian Church, I realize the benefit that Church is for me, soul *and body*.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church ... and the *resurrection of the dead*. We know what we mean when we say that. On the last day, Jesus will raise this body. Yes, it will be renewed and glorified by Jesus’ grace and power, but it will be my body. It is sown perishable, my sins of how I’ve taken care of it ensure that. But it is “raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual one” (1 Cor 15:42–44).

97. Ibid, 131.

98. Ibid, 131.

99. Oswald records the story of a woman who fainted in the middle of a service with a half dozen doctors and nurses in attendance. None of them responded to her need until the pastor stopped and dealt with the situation, calling on them to help. The medical personnel were in their state of extra-dependence. In that situation they saw the pastor as in charge. Ibid, 132-133.

100. I am not at all criticizing the learning theory behind group work and its value. It is powerful. I use it in my teaching. I’m just saying my preference as a student is to sit and be fed.

Of course, we hardly have a frame of reference for what that glorified body will be. The one example we have is Jesus' glorified body.¹⁰¹ Hear a couple of sainted professors on this. First Dr. Siegbert Becker:

God can create and did create a sinless man in Adam. God could send and did send a sinless man to be our Savior. God can and will make pure and sinless men out of all of his believers in the resurrection.¹⁰²

Professor Daniel Deutschlander:

All that is wrong with us as a result of sin, including mortality, will disappear on the Last Day – the sin forgiven and its consequences forever destroyed. That's the difference between a "Natural body" and a "Spiritual body" in the resurrection: still a body, but minus its sins and limitations.¹⁰³

Because our bodies will be raised in the resurrection, because of what I believe about the body, the Apostle Paul applies it:

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace (Rom 6:12–14 NIV 1984).

"Offer yourselves to God . . . and offer the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness." Because Jesus will raise these bodies, our bodies are "for the Lord" (1 Cor 6:13). From the ordained praise of children and infants¹⁰⁴ to the final sigh of a saint whose body has lost all function and ability. From the construction worker to the CEO, from the pastor sitting at his desk to the teacher in a classroom, from the mother bearing and raising her children to the father playing catch with his son. "Our bodies are for the Lord, both now in our daily tasks on earth and forever in the new heavens and new earth."¹⁰⁵ In order for our bodies to do what we do for the Lord, we must take care of our bodies.

101. Wilbert Gawrisch expresses this clearly in his essay "The Practical Application of the Doctrine of the Two Natures of Christ." "Jesus did not lay aside his human nature when he rose from the dead, and he never will. He still possesses it and will possess it to all eternity. When the Bible tells us that at Jesus' return on the last day, 'every eye will see him' (Revelation 1:7), it is speaking of him according to his human nature. According to his divine nature he is the 'King eternal, immortal, invisible' (1 Timothy 1:1), 'whom no one has seen or can see' (1 Timothy 6:16)," Lange and Albrecht, *Our Great Heritage*, vol. 2, 449.

102. Lange and Albrecht, *Our Great Heritage*, vol. 1, 304.

103. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds*, 555.

104. Psalm 8:2.

105. Dodds, "What Does the Body Say."

Part IV

A Reasoned Response: Acting Like I Believe.

I believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... so the Pastor cares for his body. But how?

In Romans 7, Paul writes that he would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. Let me just say “thank you” to the program committee for this symposium for making me learn a little bit more about the care of the human body. You showed me what a sinner I am. There is no other conclusion. When I know what causes heart disease and high blood pressure and obesity and all the things that go with that, what I so often do is sin. I am a sinner. That’s the danger of a paper like this. Reviewing all the things I should or could be doing, and then looking at what I am or am not doing, or even worse, what I have or have not done... You can finish that thought. “What a wretched man I am! Who will save me from this body of death?”

Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:24–25). I can only tackle this fourth part because I believe in God the Father who created my body and promised his Son to redeem it. I can look to improve my care of my body only because I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son our Lord, who was crucified, died and was buried, and who rose, to declare all of my body-destroying sins forgiven. I can balance the needs of care for body and care for soul because “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”

So, let’s take a crack at this, not to pile you up with a list of goals you’ll never accomplish, a list of tasks you’ll never do. We’re still living in a Romans 7 world, after all. For everything I should do, I can quickly come up with 3 obstacles that will do their best to prevent me from doing that thing. But one is for sure. If you don’t think about it, if you don’t intentionalize it, you’ll be sure not to be growing in it (your sanctification as it pertains to self-care, that is, not your waistline).

First thing I want to say: Don’t feel guilty about taking time for this. I have found for myself that my default is to do things that are good for my physical health only once everything else is done, or at least only if I have a really good rationale, like “Some exercise will help me think more clearly when I get back to work.” While that’s true, I’m here to tell you it’s OK to prioritize caring for your health, even when it is just for that reason – it’s your health.¹⁰⁶

Paul told Timothy, “Physical training *is* of some value” (1 Tim 4:8). In Ephesians, when husbands are told to love their wives “as their own bodies,”¹⁰⁷ it’s a given that “no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it” (Eph 5:28). When Elijah wanted to die, God made sure he got food and rest for his body.¹⁰⁸ Jesus invited his stressed and overworked disciples, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31). And then, when

“Offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”
– Romans 6:13

106. Obviously, within reason. It would be possible to make an idol of your body and neglect your other callings by pursuing this one. A quick look around this room, however, assures me that that would be the exception, not the rule here.

107. Ephesians 5:28.

108. 1 Kings 19.

the people cut short that opportunity for rest, Jesus had compassion on them. He didn't want to send them away hungry, "or they may collapse on the way," he said (Matt 15:32). The elder John prays that his dear friend "enjoy good health...even as your soul is getting along well" (3 John 2). I know you know it, but it's true: God cares about your health.

So, we can too, and not only in my struggle against sin.¹⁰⁹ We care about our health also as a way to give glory to God—for the sake of caring for and enjoying the gift of a body God has given. Let's do this. Be ready for hard work. Remember, we who have the firstfruits of the spirit, "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). In this sin-stained world and with bodies we've coated with layers of sin, sometimes the groaning as we take care of these gifts will be outward as well.

But it's not rocket science. In all the reading I did, there wasn't anything earth shattering. You read some of these studies and you wonder "who paid to find out what effect eating more fast food and exercising less would have on a person?"¹¹⁰ You probably know most of what I'm about to share. But, then again, you already knew the Creed and you made it through that part of the paper. Here again—the value will be in the reminders of what you know and the encouragement to implement it. My prayer is that this paper give you your own version of my June 9th Polar Pop Predicament.

Let me explain. When I was assigned this paper, I weighed 253.4 lbs. In our first zoom meeting about the symposium, Professor Paustian suggested I needed to lose 20 pounds to be credible on this topic. I gave up soda for Lent, took on a modified "Soulcon Challenge" with one of my members, made a few other changes, and within a few weeks I was within a couple pounds of credible. Then, I got together with two of my brothers for a couple days to film for the God-Lived Life Stewardship Challenge that hopefully you will all be using in your congregations this fall.¹¹¹ Turns out, my brothers make me less credible.¹¹² I came back from that trip and realized that after all my hard work and sacrifice, I was only down 5 pounds off my high-water mark. So, I got back on my horse and the pounds ever so slowly came back off. Lent was over, but I was trying to be better about my soda consumption anyway.

Then, on June 9th, I got some gas at the Circle K after a shut-in visit. Circle K was having a summer promotion where you could play Rock-Paper-Scissors every day to win a prize. I had a free Polar Pop sitting in my prize wallet because rock does, in fact, beat scissors. And there it was – that beautiful green and red glow of Mountain Dew, all 32 ounces and 124 grams of delicious sugar, promising energy to get back to work on this paper, and all the flavor you can only get in

109. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:27 "No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

110. Apparently, the National Institute of Health paid for some of them. Consider this quote from Warren's *The Daniel Plan*: "The National Institute of Health spends \$800 million a year trying to discover the cause of obesity. Could it be the 29 pounds of French fries, 23 pounds of pizza, 24 pounds of ice cream, 53 gallons of soda, 24 pounds of artificial sweeteners, 2.7 pounds of salt, 90,000 milligrams of caffeine consumed every year by the average American?" Rick Warren, et al., *The Daniel Plan: 40 Days to a Healthier Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 37.

111. Shameless plug: This year's Synod Stewardship series is available at <https://welscongregationalervices.net/a-god-lived-life>.

112. Clearly, only when it comes to my weight. I'll ride their reputation coattails anytime when it comes to work.

the real thing – no Diet soda for this guy – all those chemicals are bad for you.¹¹³ So, do you see my dilemma? I didn't want my prize to expire. That would be bad stewardship. I probably shouldn't have that much sugar or caffeine. Although a little pep in the afternoon could help. I actually walked back and forth to the Polar Pop area thrice as I wrestled with this dilemma.

I got the soda, and thoroughly enjoyed it. But ... and here is the victory—it came with a reminder and promise to myself of how I wouldn't do this again anytime soon. Today, for a little treat, and because, well, “free.” But not tomorrow. If this paper can give you your own version of that battle – I'd be happy. In other words, I'm not looking to chisel for myself a body worthy of the cover of GQ or for our ministerium to suddenly look like a line-up from the Bachelorette, looking for every excuse to lose our shirts. But a couple of small steps might be nice. That's how progress happens after all.

In his *The New You*, Nelson Searcy writes:

Small, incremental steps are the key to transitioning from an unhealthy lifestyle to a healthy one, the key to stepping into the fullness of the new you. Don't think you have to undergo an instant extreme makeover to get where you need to be. Just focus on minor improvements every day, every week, and every month. Over time, you will be amazed at the cumulative effect of your small efforts.¹¹⁴

There is good reason to take these small steps. God has use for you. Carl Muehler points to Luther's words to his colleague Philip Melanchthon¹¹⁵:

It is reported that as Melanchthon stood before the Diet of Augsburg (a very stressful situation, where there was certainly going to be a gap between idealistic goals and resultant reality), Luther wrote: “I command you and the entire circle of my friends to force you, under the threat of an anathema, to observe regular habits for the sake of your health so that you do not commit suicide and then pretend you did it in obedience to God. For we also serve God by doing nothing, in fact, in no way more than by doing nothing. For this reason, He, above all things, wanted the Sabbath so rigidly kept. See to it that you do not despise this. What I am writing is the Word of God!”¹¹⁶

Eleanor Brown wrote: “Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”¹¹⁷

But let's be real. Self-care takes time and effort, energy that otherwise would be dedicated somewhere else. Sobering to me was time spent listening to a lecture by Timothy Saleska of

113. At least that's what I tell myself as my excuse for wanting to drink the full-sugar version.

114. Nelson Searcy and Jennifer Dykes Henderson, *The New You: A Guide to Better Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 18.

115. Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), German Lutheran reformer.

116. Muehler, “Overcoming Barriers,” 4.

117. Quoted in Muehler. *Ibid*, 72.

Concordia, St. Louis.¹¹⁸ He used a reading from David Sedaris' book, *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls* to powerfully paint the picture. Imagine, if you will, a stove with four burners. Each of those burners represent something that takes bandwidth in our lives. One is family. One is health. One is work and the fourth, friends. But you can't fire all four full-strength. To be successful at any of them, he said, you have to essentially cut one of those burners off. To be very successful, cut off two. Now, who doesn't want to be successful? Here comes the introspection. I'm looking at some "successful" people here. Which burners have you cut off? You can probably think through stages of life where that's alternated. You probably have learned pieces of this truth the hard way. Balance is key.

Part of that balance is this self-care. As we prepare to care for our bodies and consider what it means to get fit, keep this balance in mind, and don't underestimate self-care. The word fitness implies something. We are getting fit for something. As Christians we know what that is, our fitness has a purpose, that we be fit to serve God in all of our callings, "'ready for every good work' (Titus 3:1). In Christ, we want to cleanse our bodies 'from what is dishonorable' (sin) and 'be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, *ready for every good work*' (2 Timothy 2:21)."¹¹⁹

In his blog, "Desiring God," David Mathis discussed it this way:

Then come these bodies. There's no way around them. Will they be barriers to doing good or *ready to act*? When needs arise, will our wills be primed to break the inertia of our inactivity? When love calls, will our bodies be ready to move, with hands and arms not too bulky and not too flabby, that can reach and lift and pull and push? Will we be ready with feet and legs that feel life and energy as they move, rather than sitting inactive? Will I be ready and willing to make use of this body God gave me, or have I imbibed the pattern of the age to keep it on the shelf and use it as little as humanly possible?

God did not design and build our human bodies to be liabilities. They are precious gifts, crafted and sustained by God, to enable us to live and *do good*, for his glory, in our world. Jesus says, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). This requires bodies.¹²⁰

Paul was willing to beat his body and make it his slave. Why? "So that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Cor 9:27). So, to give you some food for thought, let's discuss our self-care when it comes to four areas: **Food, Exercise, Rest, and Support.**

118. Timothy Saleska, "09. Personal Impact: Physical Health within Ministry" (2019), PRA 311-Formation Hour, 9.

119. David Mathis, "In Him We Live and Move: Stewarding a Body in Sedentary Times," *Desiring God* (September 20, 2020), <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/in-him-we-live-and-move>.

120. Ibid.

Food

First, food. I am responsible in my care for this gift of a body God has given me to care for it. Part of that is providing it with nourishment so that it can be healthy. Obviously, I'm not an expert here. I don't think I've ever deprived my body of the sustenance it needs, but I have given it more than it should have to handle at times. Here's the issue. I love food. I like the way it tastes and the way it makes me feel in the moment. Food is good... in moderation. Too much of it causes problems and makes it harder to avoid having too much of it going forward.

In my research, I learned for the first time about a body chemical named Leptin and how it works. Leptin is known as the "satiety hormone." It is produced by fat cells to help regulate energy expenditure and also tells the brain when you are full. But then, when we make a habit of eating too much, we can develop leptin resistance. The more we overeat, the more fat cells develop, so you'd think, more leptin, so our brain should really get the message and we wouldn't feel hungry. The problem is, that, at a point, our brain says, "this can't be right, no one would eat this much. This must be a malfunction." Then the brain reads the flood of leptin as a starvation alert. That's why we sometimes feel hungry when we shouldn't be and don't have the energy we should.¹²¹

Even this causes me to stand in awe at how fearfully and wonderfully made our bodies are! The better we understand these gifts, the better we can take care of them. So, lesson one when it comes to food: Don't overeat. Eat right. But how? I read way too many pages of people talking about what foods are good and which ones we should avoid. It won't be hard for you to find eighteen different studies with very clear guidelines on what you should eat and what you shouldn't. Often, they are contradictory. One says to eat a vegan diet, another to load up on protein. One says avoid all carbs; another highlights their value. One diet produces some results but is unsustainable for you. Another one works for a while, but then the effects seem to be minimized. If you're anything like me, you've been on that roller coaster longer than you care to admit.

That said, I don't want to use this paper to propose one specific diet that is supposedly the way for a pastor to care for his body when it comes to food. After all my reading and all my attempts, here's what I want to encourage you to do: Try. Do something. Think about it, that's all. You might not be at a place to put in the effort to completely overhaul your diet, but do something. Think about the Polar Pop¹²² before you buy it, that's all. Remember what you believe about your body and let that play into the decision. Taking a portion of the cacophony of voices out there and trying to combine them, here are some things that have helped me. Maybe they'll help you.

1. Limit portions.

Remember, I like food, and my default is that if I like food, more food must be better. I've got to be careful at "all you can eat" places. That's all. I have to limit the times I do that. When I'm dishing up at home, I just need to remind myself that leftovers aren't a bad thing. I don't need that 3rd plate. Remember my visit with my brothers that put 15 pounds back on? I'm thinking the trip to the Mongolian Barbeque where you pay the same whether your plate is full or mounding

121. Thanks to Dr. Joe Esposito's weekly radio show on WSB-Atlanta and <https://medwinfamily.com/leptin-resistance-weight-gain> for the insights into Leptin.

122. Or "Mega Buddy" for those of you blessed to live within the range of a Kwik Trip.

didn't help. And did we really need the appetizers on top of that? It's like I was trying to get my hypothalamus to ignore the leptin screaming at it. Limit portions. Something to think about.

2. Set some limits that you very rarely break.

I've found one of my weak spots is consuming calories at night. Growing up in a house that never slept and always had snacks out, that's just what I default to. I had gotten into a habit of having a drink before bed and, well, you have to have something to snack on with that, so... Dinner was plenty, but I just enjoyed the late-night snacks. I still love it, but the limit I've set for myself is that I'll only do that with company, and maybe on the weekend. I can't say I've kept that one perfectly, but at least thinking about it each time I'm tempted, it reduces the transgressions of it to "rarely." Often, it also leads to a slightly healthier choice, or at least, less of the unhealthy choice. Right now, snacking is not automatic. For me, that's progress.

3. Have good options.

I don't like things to go to waste, so I will finish them. This machine requires a lot of energy. I eat often. When there are piles of candy and chips around, that's what I put in my mouth. But, if I make a conscious effort to have some unsalted nuts, or carrots, or fruit around, I find it is possible to choose them... when I think about it. If I keep water on hand at all times, and even some healthy drink option (my go to is the Naked Juices or their store brand counterparts), the "need" for a soda isn't felt as strongly. Yes, sometimes those urges are still there, and I need to think through each time whether it's worth it, but with no other options, it's much harder.

4. Close the Container

Here is one that has astounded me how effective it has been for me. I snack a lot at my desk. When I have whatever I'm snacking on open, I don't even realize how much of it I consume until it is gone. But if I pour out one serving and put the container away, it works. I can't believe how soft my mind is that this works, but it does. The effort of getting the container back out and opening it is enough of a deterrent to give my brain time to realize that it doesn't really need that second serving, at least not right now.

5. Enjoy the food you really enjoy.

"A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry" (Eccl 10:19). God has given us food and drink and caused it to cause us pleasure. That is good. That is a blessing from God. It is OK to enjoy what you eat and drink. But, in Proverbs 23:1-2, the wise one tells us, "When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony." Enjoying the gifts of food and drink comes with a caution. Don't overdo it. Don't get so used to the best food that you get consumed by it. So, this piece of advice is to enjoy the food you really enjoy. I like French fries, but are they *that much* better than broccoli? Maybe for you, that's the one you choose. But I'll go with the bacon and cheese on my burger instead. Is the third plate of pizza at the pizza buffet going to make my enjoyment of that special treat better? Probably not.

When it comes to food, the APSBAT¹²³ I'm going for is this: Think about it. Pay attention to what you are eating and make decisions based on that. One of the biggest factors in my first 20 pounds of weight loss was simply that I committed to track everything I ate and drank for a

123. "All Participants Should Be Able To"

month. Just having to pull out my phone and take a moment to think about what I was about to eat in itself helped me to make better decisions. I don't do that specifically anymore, but it did cause me to pay closer attention going forward, and I know I have that tool in my kit if I decide I need to step it up in this at some time.

Let's use that famous physician Hippocrates of Cos¹²⁴ to transition to our next point.

Even when all is known, the care of a man is not yet complete, because eating alone will not keep a man well; he must also take exercise. For food and exercise, while possessing opposite qualities, yet work together to produce health.¹²⁵

Exercise

Again, it is no surprise that an important piece of taking care of our bodies is exercise. We've likely all felt it. When we were in shape, things were better. Our bodies could do more, handle more, endure more. The worse shape we are in, things get worse. And again, here, there are plenty of different theories on which exercises are better and how much it should be, but my advice here is similar. Just do it. Do something. Think about it. From something as small as taking the stairs instead of the elevator and doing some squats¹²⁶ at your desk to training for a marathon or taking on a workout regimen – just do something. Plan it. Commit to it. Do it. Whether that is a daily walk, a regular run, or hitting the gym 3 times a week. Set reasonable goals. For me, it's 40 pushups 6 mornings a week and 3 sessions of cardio (2 runs and a bike ride) each week. All totaled, that's usually only about two hours a week, but it is something, and it is consistent. Consider playing more. Exercise can be fun. Adult leagues are popping up all over for kickball, volleyball, pickleball, you name it.¹²⁷

In his senior thesis on the pastor and exercise,¹²⁸ Nathan Loersch draws this conclusion about the importance of exercise:

In keeping with the focus of this thesis, it might be said that if a pastor recognizes the importance of his body as a valuable tool in his ministry and feels that physical exercise helps enable his body, mind, and emotions to withstand the rigors of ministry, then he will do what he can to use exercise to help his body carry out ministry. If he recognizes that physical exercise can benefit his ability to carry out ministry, then even if he doesn't necessarily enjoy it, he may make the sacrifice of exercising for the good of his ministry.

124. Hippocrates of Cos (460-370 BC).

125. Hippocrates of Cos, *Regimen I* (Loeb Classical Library, accessed 23 August 2021), https://www.loebclassics.com/view/hippocrates_cos-regimen_i/1931/pb_LCL150.229.xml.

126. In the afternoon, I often get quite sleepy if I'm not in conversation with people. Reading sometimes becomes difficult as my eyes want to close and I have to read a line again and again. I've been amazed at the effectiveness of just coming out of my chair and doing a few slow squats, even while reading.

127. We'll get into some of the added benefits of this type of exercise when we get to the support section.

128. Nathan F. Loersch, "The Impact of Regular Physical Exercise on the Pastor and His Ministry," Master's thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (2015), 17. A helpful read very specific to this topic.

It's not just long term either. I mentioned in footnote 126 the power of doing something in the afternoon when my energy level is low. As we are nearly an hour in to this afternoon session, I'm guessing there may be a few energy levels dipping right now. Play along with me. If you can do a push-up, I'll ask for 10. Otherwise, how about 10 squats? Seriously.

What did that do to your energy level? Admit it. You feel better. It would have been even better if no one had seen you, I know, but, we're all in this together. At the risk of creeping into the topic of this Symposium's third essay,¹²⁹ I'll quote Loersch again in discussing another benefit of exercise – your mood. While many of the books in the bibliography mentioned these results, and you've probably experienced it, Loersch found a quote that summarizes it well:

One popular theory is that reduced levels of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, play a role in causing or maintaining depressive and anxiety disorders. Antidepressant medications, such as Paxil (paroxetine), are thought to work by helping rebalance neurotransmitter levels. In fact, drugs like Prozac (fluoxetine), Paxil, and Zoloft (sertraline) belong to a class of medications called *serotonin selective reuptake inhibitors* (SSRIs). These drugs work for both depression and anxiety disorders. A number of studies have demonstrated that exercise may be the nondrug equivalent of antidepressant medications like these. That is, exercise increases production in a manner similar to the desired action of antidepressant medications.¹³⁰

These things work together. If I've been exercising, I've found it easier to make better decisions about other areas of my health. And if I've been making good decisions about what I eat, I find it easier to exercise. Our next area of self-care plays a big part in this as well.

Rest

“God grants sleep to the one he loves” (Ps 127:2).

Rest. God commanded it for his people Israel.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exod 20:8–11 NIV 1984).

How are we to view this rest? We'll look at two parts. First: sleep. For some, sleep is what you have to do when you've done as much as your body allowed that day. It is the necessary evil that gets in the way of more work or play. For others, sleep is an end unto itself. Consider the Hebrew concept of night and day in this regard. For them, the day begins with night, with sleep.

129. Dr. Benjamin Kohls is covering the Pastor and Emotional Health.

130. Loersch, “The Impact,” 24. Quoting: Otto, Michael W., Ph.D. and Smits, Jasper A. J. Ph.D. *Exercise for Mood and Anxiety – Proven Strategies for Overcoming Depression and Enhancing Well-being*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

“Sleep is not the reward for a day well spent; it is preparation for what God is calling you to tomorrow.”¹³¹

Certainly, our bodies function better with proper rest. Most of what I read agreed that between seven and eight hours of sleep a night would give you that, allowing your body to function well, ready to accomplish your exercise and everything else you ask of it.

A day off, occasional vacations or retreats, even sabbaticals¹³² all play in here too. But here again, the “why” matters. Looking to Scripture, we see our Savior repeatedly finding times to get away and rest, being refreshed through prayer. Remember what he said when “so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat”? “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and *get some rest*” (Mark 6:31). Truly human, his body and mind needed it.

Even before that, in Genesis, we notice God resting. He didn’t need it. Charles Arand makes the point that it clearly wasn’t because he lacked anything that rest would replenish. Yet “God rested and was refreshed (Exodus 31:17). One might suggest that God rejoiced in his work.”¹³³

Carl Muehler reminds the reader that the Sabbath was designed to remember what is good.¹³⁴ Our time away from work is important to help us gain perspective on what we do most of our days. William Schumacher echoes these thoughts, reminding us that our rest is not just about being refreshed so that we can work more. He calls it a “matter of moral character or spiritual discipline.”¹³⁵

It is a mistake to reduce rest to a necessary instrument in support of our work, or to a spiritual discipline in pursuit of our salvation. Laughter, and perhaps even a degree of

131. Searcy and Henderson, *The New You*, 152. The full quote for your enjoyment: “In our culture, we consider nightfall the end of the day. We work hard through all our waking hours, and when the hour is finally late enough to justify our actions, we turn off all our screens and fall into bed exhausted. The next day begins when the alarm clock goes off. However, the Hebrew concept of night and day illustrated in Genesis is much different and arguably more productive. In it, each sunset begins the preparation period for the next day. Sleep is not the reward for a day well spent; it is preparation for what God is calling you to tomorrow. In other words, tonight is not the end of today; it is the beginning of tomorrow.”

132. A brother in the ministry recently shared with me the blessings he received from what he called his “Covid Sabbatical”—when most was cancelled and everything else was online and done by Thursday, so that, for a couple of months, he enjoyed the first real “weekends” of his ministry. He spoke of the renewed energy for ministry he now has and said, “I can see why people take Sabbaticals, especially when they’ve been somewhere for a long time.”

133. Arand, “Back to the Beginning,” 141. Here is the full quote: “So what characterizes the day of rest? Luther notes that God rested, that is to say, he was satisfied with all he had made. God rested and was refreshed (Ex 31:17). One might suggest that God rejoiced in his work. The seventh day would provide the basis for setting aside a day to celebrate God’s creative activity (Ex 20) and the redemptive activity (Dt 5). It also ‘anticipates the end-time restoration of creation to the state of rest that characterized it as the completion of God’s creative activity’” (Hebrews 4).

134. Muehler, “Overcoming Barriers,” 14. “In the creation story, God used the Sabbath to reflect on the goodness of his creation: ‘God saw all that he had made and it was very good’ (Gen 1:31a). Likewise, Sabbath reflection invites people to remember that the physical world, including humanity, is good and in the hands of God.”

135. Williams Schumacher, “Faithful Witness in Work and Rest,” *Concordia Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015), 143.

folly, lie at the heart of rest, and the sheer goodness of these things is self-evident, whether we can fit them neatly into our dogmatics or not: the amiable companionship of simply being with people we love, the exquisite pleasure of a joke well told, the indulgent inertia of sleeping late, the little delight of a cigar with a perfect draw. We must not make it too serious a matter, this rest of ours, because earnestness desecrates pleasure. When we speak of rest as “health” we mean that the well-being and flourishing of human creatures includes and embraces such quietness, levity, laughter, affection, and even plain idleness as part of our sanity and wholeness.¹³⁶

Sounds to me like he’s talking about what happens at Pastors’ Conference¹³⁷ after the agenda is done for the day, or when brother pastors make a point of finding a way to spend time together and have fun.¹³⁸ Making that happen means prioritizing certain times in your schedule for this kind of rest, this “consecrated negligence,” as one brother called it.¹³⁹

Which all transitions us neatly into the fourth area of self-care...

Support

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17).

Even the most powerful leaders needed support from those around them. Moses, the one God spoke to “face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (Exod 33:11) needed Aaron when he was intimidated to speak (Exod 3), and to hold up his hands at Rephidim (Exod 17). He needed Jethro to call him on his arrogance of trying to handle everything himself and teach him to delegate (Exod 18). David had his friend Jonathan and then his advisors and his inner circle. Paul had Silas and Timothy and Luke. He knew he needed them.¹⁴⁰ Even Jesus begged his disciples for support when the battle was intense: “Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matt 26:38). How could we think we can handle any of this on our own? Scripture tells us, this body of Christ is “joined and held together by every supporting ligament” (Eph 4:16). That’s why “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you,’ and the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Cor 12:21). Believers need support.

How much more those whose job it is to guide and encourage and comfort fellow believers! Here again, Muehler summarizes the research:

Venart et al., quoting several studies, conclude that counselors need people in their lives to be honest with them and provide support for them. They must allow them to be real and

136. Ibid, 144.

137. Anyone up for some Sheepshead tonight?

138. Granted, sometimes this challenges our resolve on the “food” section above, but...

139. In his conference paper Rodney Pudell wrote: “Those that fail to set priorities and learn the fine art of consecrated negligence either squirm in continual guilt or languish in chronic exhaustion,” Rodney Pudell, “Alternatives to Donating Your Stomach to the Parish,” Paper presented at the *St. Croix Pastor-Teacher-Delegate Conference, St. Croix, MN* (June 1989), 16.

140. Consider his pleas for companionship and support in 2 Timothy.

genuine. However, the relationships need to be mutually supportive, and the counselors must access the relationships consistently. Another study by Bledsoe and Setterlund makes an even stronger point, noting that support systems, including spouses, colleagues, and mentors, are needed in order to thrive. These studies show that we should not neglect other relationships and responsibilities for the sake of ministry.¹⁴¹

In other words, we can't do this alone. Making lifestyle changes and focusing on self-care will take us helping one another. You have experienced it. If you start a workout program on your own, you're less likely to stick with it than if you have a partner meeting you. If you make a "resolution" and don't tell anyone that will check up with you about it – you're less likely to keep that resolution. Remember the discussion of extra-dependence above? We, who are in jobs in which so many are looking to us to give them their extra-dependence, we need opportunities to be fed and led by others. We need real friends. Be a blessing to one another in that.

Then, don't forget the support that comes from medical professionals. God has blessed them with the training and experience to help you in your care of the body as well. Don't be afraid to seek their help and use their services. The statistics quoted above demonstrated the rose-colored glasses so many clergymen wear when it comes to health. Foolish it is to bury your head in the sand and try to ignore health problems. Your doctor may be able to help give you a realistic view of your health and encouragement to treasure it.

So, there it is. Months of reading self-care books and reviewing what Scripture says about the body, and our to-do list is simple. Do something. Think about it. Plan for it. Find someone to help support you in it. Depending on where you are at in caring for your body, you may have a long way to go or this might just be a bit of an encouragement for what you are already doing. Either way, I pray it has been a benefit. I pray that you can make a commitment or two on which to work. Think about what you eat and drink. Intentionalize some exercise plan. Take time to rest, both in bed at night, and with your friends. Then, share your plans with someone who will hold you accountable either explicitly or implicitly.

And never forget why. All of this is the logical act of worship as we stand in awe of our God and praise him because we are fearfully and wonderfully made, as we thank him for redeeming the bodies we've contaminated, as we look forward to the resurrection of all flesh.¹⁴²

Ponder that for a moment and find strength to care for your bodies in all the many ways God reminds you how important your bodies are. In every font you pass and in every dove or shell you see, in every invocation you hear, take comfort in your regular returns to the bath of Baptism, as the Triune God claimed you, body and soul, as His own, as the Spirit made your body his temple. In the physical feeding of Christ's body and blood for the strengthening of your soul,

141. Muehler, "Overcoming Barriers," 36.

142. Powerful for me is the reminder of this we find in Good Friday's Closing Canticle, verse 3 of CW 434:

Lord, let at last your angels come; To Abram's bosom bear me home that I may die unfearing,
And in its narrow chamber keep My body safe in peaceful sleep until your reappearing.
And then from death awaken me that my own eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, your glorious face, my Savior and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend, And I will praise you without end.

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993).

wonder at God's love that took flesh in order to redeem it. Even in every weakness of body or breakdown in health, let that be a reminder of the resurrection of your body to come. Let it point your eyes ahead to when these bodies we sow as perishable are raised imperishable, when these bodies sown in dishonor are raised in glory, bodies sown in weakness raised in power.¹⁴³

After all, "I believe that God made me and all that exists and that he gave me my body."¹⁴⁴ I believe in Jesus Christ, who was "incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became truly human," who, in that body "was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried." And on the third day, that very same body "rose again from the dead."¹⁴⁵ And "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church...the Resurrection of the body."¹⁴⁶

I believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made, so I will care for this body.

Now...May God the Father, who created your body;
 May God the Son, + who by his blood redeemed your body together with the soul;
 May God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified your body to be his temple;
 keep your bodies to the day of the resurrection of all flesh. Amen.¹⁴⁷

Soli Deo Gloria

143. 1 Corinthians 15:42-43.

144. Quoted from Luther's Explanation for First Article of the Apostles' Creed. Luther, *Luther's Catechism*, 130.

145. Quoted from the Nicene Creed. Ibid, 15.

146. Quoted from the Apostles' Creed. Ibid, 4.

147. Adapted from *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*, 90.

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