**Journey Into Wholeness “*Seek peace and pursue it” Ps 34:14***

**Session 9: “CARING FOR THE BODY”**

***Overview: This session will discuss some foundational keys to healthy living and caring for the body.***

***“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20***

There are many good reasons to care for the body, but, above all, our body is the vessel of the Spirit, and God calls us to glorify Him in and through our outer man. We are called to be intentional about how we care for our bodies and to treat it with respect and honor. Our physical bodies are the instruments through which we make a difference in the world for God. Taking care of our bodies is the foundation for all other pursuits in life.

Remember, the ***Journey Into Wholeness*** is about seeing and defining discipleship in broader terms. The ***“great commandment”*** is to love God with our whole being – spirit, soul, and body (***Luke 10:27***). Thus, true biblical discipleship is the commitment of one’s spirit, soul, and body to the Lord. We must come to see the interconnectedness of our whole being and how the Lord wants to restore and transform all areas of our person. We want to see growth in God as including and integrating all parts of our being – or as a ***holistic discipleship model***.

This session focuses on how we can better thrive and be healthy on a deeper and more connected level in our body. **We will focus on four key foundational areas that can help each one of us to live healthier.**

1. **SLEEP**

**Getting good and consistent rest and sleep is one of the fundamental practices to achieve health in our bodies and our whole beings.** It is also a big portion of our 24 hour daily cycle. If we don’t get adequate sleep on a consistent basis, we are diminishing all our major systems and diminishing our ability on many fronts – immune system, metabolism, mental health, focus, drive, etc.

***“Good sleep promotes good health. Sleep is one of the*** ***three pillars of health******, along with nutrition and movement – it is a fundamental part of our overall health and wellbeing. Sleep comprises one-third of an individual’s life, affects all aspects of health and, conversely, is affected by everything that is going on in the mind and body, as well as in the environment.” SleepHealth.org***

A 2022 Gallup survey found only 32% of Americans said they got “excellent” or “very good” sleep; 35% described their sleep as “good”; and 33% said their sleep was “fair” or “poor.”

Every cell in your body has a circadian rhythm, meaning every cell has a 24 hour circadian clock that is regulated by genes. One of the keys to good sleep is getting the millions of your internal clocks to align together and be in unison on a consistent basis. Many people do not regulate their sleep and, therefore, it is like being continually on a travel schedule – with “jet lag” and a compromised immune system.

Andrew Huberman, a PHD in neuroscience and Professor in the Department of Neurobiology at the Stanford University School of Medicine, has done extension work on sleep and the science of how to align our body with optimal daily routines to help with sleep and our bodily/neurological functions.

Dr. Huberman says that our goal should be to get good sleep 80% of the nights. **He says the number one practice to focus on for better sleep and regulating many neurological functions is to get natural light within your eyes within 1 hour of waking up. Dr. Huberman says that this practice alone has an outsized positive effect on a number of things** (**Dr. Huberman, “The Optimal Morning Routine”, YouTube):**

1. **Moderates the timing of our “Cortisol Pulse”**

Once every 24 hours, every person is going to get a boost in cortisol. Cortisol is an essential hormone that affects almost every organ and tissue in your body. It plays many important roles, including:

* Regulating your body’s stress response.
* Helping control your body’s use of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates - your metabolism.
* Suppressing inflammation.
* Regulating blood pressure.
* Regulating blood sugar.
* Helping control your sleep-wake cycle.

A healthy cortisol boost when you wake sets your temperature rhythm, your level of alertness, your level of focus, and your mood. You want the cortisol boost to happen as early as possible in the day. Getting natural light and photons into your eyes when you awake anchors your cortisol and greatly helps to bring you into a good sleep rhythm.

Note: A late-shifted cortisol pulse (if you sleep in, wake up late, or stay inside after you wake without getting natural light), then your system will be shifted late (late Cortisol Pulse), which is the signature of feeling “out of it”, depressed, anxious, and having difficulty sleeping later.

Too many of us are spending way too much time indoors and not getting natural sunlight. We move from indoor space to indoor space, and when we are outside we wear sunglasses. Our goal is to go outside as soon as possible in the day and get natural light into our eyes (don’t look directly at the sun) and on our skin.

1. **Triggers cells in your eyes called Melanopsin Ganglion cells**

Getting photons into your eyes triggers neurons that sends signals to your hypothalamus, which releases peptides which is a wake-up signal for your whole brain and body. This process sets a timer for the onset of melatonin release 16 hours later – which makes you drowsy and wanting to go to sleep.

1. **Triggers the neuromodulator Dopamine**

Dopamine is known as the “feel good” modulator, but its main role in the brain is to stimulate drive, motivation, craving, and pursuit. Dopamine is not so much the molecule of pleasure…it is the molecule of drive and “life force”. Dopamine is the molecule that manufactures adrenaline (epinephrine), testosterone (men), and estrogen (women). So, the sun and dopamine do make you feel good.

A study in Israel was conducted with people being in the sun for 20-30 minutes, 3x/week, and they had widespread exposure to the skin (appropriate clothing, but as much skin as possible was exposed to light). Testosterone and estrogen levels were measured and both men and women had significantly elevated levels. Radiation from the sun effects the regulation of the endocrine system and the release of human sex hormones.

**Overall, we feel much better when our eyes (and skin) get light and the photons from the sun. Our goal would be to wake up as close to when the sun comes up as possible and go outside (within an hour of waking) and get light into your eyes (indirectly) and on your skin. You can accomplish the needed positive effects with a minimum of 5 minutes, but Dr. Huberman says a longer period of around 10 minutes is ideal (on a sunny day). In the winter months or when it is overcast outside, you want to double or triple the time (20-30 minutes).**

Getting light into the eyes doesn’t solve every problem, but it really helps to regulate your system, give you energy, focus, motivation, drive, set your body temperature, and increase your dopamine (testosterone and estrogen) and epinephrine levels. With all this good stuff, it also has a powerful effect on your sleep cycle and falling asleep at night.

1. **EXERCISE**

***“Therefore I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly; I box in such a way, as to avoid hitting the air; I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:26-27***

***“Typically, people who exercise, start eating better and becoming more productive at work. They smoke less and show more patience with colleagues and family. They use their credit cards less frequently and say they feel less stressed. Exercise is a keystone habit that triggers widespread change.” Charles Duhigg,*** ***The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business***

***“If you are in a bad mood go for a walk. If you are still in a bad mood go for another walk.” Hippocrates***

Exercise has wide ranging effects on our body, soul, and spirit. Exercise is one of those key practices that you really can’t quantify. The positive effects of exercise, particularly exercising outside, cannot be exaggerated or overestimated.

Many of us in our culture and society today are programmed to think in terms of instant gratification. It is hard for us to invest in the long term positive effects of exercise and other practices (eating well, praying/meditating, etc.)…We would rather settle for short term pleasure that leads to long term problems. **Consider that the person who seeks short term pleasure often experiences long term pain…but the person who seeks short term pain will enjoy long term pleasure.** How much pleasure you will enjoy in the long term is often directly related to how much pain you are willing to suffer in the short term.

This biblical principle applies to exercise. We all know that exercise is good for us, right?

**Here are just some of the proven benefits of exercising:**

1. Energy boost, alertness and motivation
2. Greater productivity and mental clarity
3. Improved mood, mental state, and brain function
4. Increase blood flood/circulation and cardiovascular health
5. Reduced stress, hypertension and anxiety
6. Better sleep and rest
7. Increased lymphatic flow and health
8. Better respiratory functioning
9. Weight loss and muscle building
10. Increased self-esteem
11. Joint support and pain reduction

**So, why don’t we exercise?** We have thought in our mind that it is too much work, too much effort, and that we would rather go without? But by not exercising, we are going without all the benefits and more that are listed above.

We often think – ***“I am too tired to go and exercise…and exercise is going to get me more tired and exhausted.”*** The opposite is actually true. If we put the time in, we will quickly reap and see the benefits, and you will be motivated to exercise more.

**Exercising empowers you and gives you a sense of control over your life that bleeds into other areas.** When we discipline the body there is a correlating effect on our ability to discipline the mind, soul and the spirit.

**Robert Herbst**, a 19-time world champion powerlifter, says, ***“People should look for physical activity with the attitude that any movement is good, whether it’s walking the dog, gardening, or taking out the garbage. Also, the amount of activity is additive. Five minutes here and there adds up and you do not have to kill yourself at the gym to meet the CDC guidelines. They just have to move more in their daily life. As they get fitter and activity becomes easier, they can add more until they are able to take on something more challenging.”*** ***Zrinka Peters, “How Much Exercise Do You Really Need?”, The Epoch Times, Dec. 28, 2022 – Jan. 3 2023.***

Start small and get outside and take a walk or a hike on one of our beautiful trails. Lift some weights, stretch, swim, paddleboard, canoe, the options are endless. Be intentional and find something you enjoy and get your body moving. There is no way to replace the value and the benefits of exercise.

1. **DRINK WATER**

About 65 to 75 percent of the human body is composed of water. Water is the foundation of every cell, each organ, and the body as a whole. Two-thirds of the water in the body is intracellular (within cells), while the remaining one-third is extracellular. The brain and the heart are made up of approximately 73 percent water, the skin is 64 percent water, and the lungs are 83 percent water. Even the hardest parts of the body, the bones, contain 31 percent water. ***Tatiana Denning, The Way of Water, The Epoch Times, Sept. 21-27, 2022.***

**Some other key health benefits of water include:**

1. Insulates the spinal cord, brain and other organs
2. Lubricates the joints
3. Regulates body temperature
4. Flushes wastes and toxins
5. Carries oxygen to the cells
6. Helps with digestion and absorption of nutrients
7. Boosts energy and mood levels
8. Helps brain function, memory and focus
9. Keeps skin hydrated
10. Helps to maintain proper blood pressure
11. Reduces the effects of aging
12. Improves physical performance
13. Builds your immune system

Clearly, water has a tremendous effect on our health and well-being. Being attentive to the amount of water you drink each day is important for optimal health. Most of us don’t drink enough water to keep our body sustained at optimum levels.

According to the ***National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine***, general water intake (from all beverages and foods) that meet most people’s needs are:

* **about 15.5 cups of water (125 ounces) each day for men**
* **about 11.5 cups (91 ounces) daily for women**
* **Note: Some simplify the recommended amount by stating that we should consume about 50% of our bodyweight in ounces of pure water every day.**

People get about 20 percent of their daily water intake from food. The rest is dependent on drinking water and water-based beverages. So, **ideally men would consume about 100 ounces (3.0 liters) of water from beverages, and women, about 73 ounces (2.12 liters) from beverages.**

A person should increase their water intake if you’re exercising or living in a hotter or drier region like ours.

**A simple way to assess your hydration level is simply observing the color of your urine. Urine that is dark in color indicates dehydration. Pale or non-colored urine typically indicates proper hydration.**

**Here are some simple tips to help you stay hydrated and drink more water:**

1. **Drink a lot of water right when you get up.** Most of us have not drank any water for 8 hours or so through the night. Drinking water immediately when waking kick starts your whole system. Drink way more than you think you should!
2. **Carry a water bottle around with you all day.** Drink from it often and keep refilling.
3. **If you don’t like the taste of water, add some lemon or other fruit.** Do what you must to increase your water intake.
4. **To supplement: drink other healthy beverages like tea and juices.** Don’t overdo anything with a lot of sugar and avoid soft drinks and too much coffee (caffeine dehydrates you).
5. **EAT NUTRIENT RICH WHOLE FOOD**

**If our physical bodies are the instruments through which we make a difference for God in the world, then our diet is the fuel that runs them.** Our goal for healthy eating should be to eat as close to a whole-foods diet as possible - meaning, eat foods as close to their original form as possible.

When food is processed or refined, it’s stripped of most of its fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and often preservatives are added in their place that are harmful to us.

A study published in the Journal of the **American Medical Association found that** **46 percent of Americans have a poor quality diet**. About half of us are not fueling our bodies in a healthy way. According to the same study, poor dietary choices are cutting our lives shorter and a poor diet is among the leading causes of poor health, particularly obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and diet-related cancers.

***“Over time, when you make healthy decisions about food, you are at a lower risk for cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and even*** ***anxiety and depression******. You will have more energy, feel better, and may even be in a better mood on a daily basis.”*** *Samantha Heller, RD**, a senior clinical nutritionist at NYU Langone Health in New York City.*

***“Bringing better intentionality to the food we eat is a habit that pays off immediately in the short term (more energy) and in the long term (better health).” Joshua Becker, “The 3 Most Essential Habits for Living Well, The Epoch Times, Sept. 14-20, 2022.***

**Each one of us is different and unique, but here are some basic suggestions for eating healthier:**

1. **Reduce/eliminate processed sugar from your diet**– There is a lot that can be said about the negative health effects of sugar. It is very important to our health to reduce our sugar consumption. Sugar causes weight gain and fat accumulation, increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. It also does a lot of bad things in the brain and is an energy drain (after the initial ‘sugar high’).
2. **Reduce/eliminate chemically processed foods from your diet** – All processed foods aren’t necessarily bad for your health, but chemically processed foods are. Chemically processed foods, also called ultra-processed foods, tend to be high in sugar, artificial ingredients, refined carbohydrates, and trans fats. They have very little nutritional value and are a major contributor to obesity and illness. Some examples of ultra-processed foods include:
* frozen or ready meals
* baked goods, including pizza, cakes, and pastries
* packaged breads
* processed cheese products
* breakfast cereals
* crackers and chips
* candy and ice cream
* instant noodles and soups
* reconstituted meats, such as sausages, nuggets, fish fingers, and processed ham
* sodas and other sweetened drinks
1. **Eat nutrient-rich whole foods as much as possible**

***"When you eat whole foods, you're getting the food in its natural state. You're getting it intact, with all of the*** ***vitamins******, minerals, and other nutrients that are in the food."******Tara Gidus, RD, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, “The Benefits of Healthy Whole Foods”,*** ***www.webmd.com******.***

**We want to eat as much healthy whole foods in the raw, rather than what remains after refinement and processing.** It's the difference between an apple and apple juice, or a baked potato and instant mashed potatoes.

**Eating healthy, whole foods has all sorts of benefits.** Many studies have found that a diet high in healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are associated with a reduced risk of diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and many types of cancer.

**Whole foods in their natural state are loaded with fiber,** **vitamins****, and minerals.** They also contain phytochemicals, the general name for the natural compounds in plants. The phytochemicals help us in many different ways. Some are antioxidants, which protect cells against damage and build your immune system.

***"One of the biggest advantages of eating whole foods is that you're getting the natural synergy of all of these nutrients together…It could be the natural combination and interaction of all of these different phytochemicals and proteins that give a food its health benefit." Tara Gidus, RD.***

There are so many healthy foods out there, so you have many options to choose the ones you like. There is no bad fruit, vegetable, nut, seed, legume, or whole grain. They’re all good for you! **Here are a few indisputably healthy foods to incorporate into your meals and snacks:**

* **Fruits** Berries, bananas, citrus, mango, kiwi, apples, melons
* **Vegetables** Leafy greens like kale, arugula, and collard greens; peppers; carrots; sweet potatoes; mushroom; squash
* **Legumes** Beans, lentils, dried peas, hummus
* **Whole grains**Brown rice, wild rice, whole-grain/ancient-grain bread, quinoa, amaranth, millet, bulgur
* **Nuts and seeds**Almonds, pistachios, cashews, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds, hemp, sunflower, pumpkin seeds

**A few tips to help you eat better:**

1. **Make a plan for your healthy diet** – Think about a specific plan of action. Make a shopping list of good foods you are going to buy. Go into the grocery and spend some time in the produce area and pick out some good foods you want to try. Make a plan how you are going to eliminate bad food choices with good ones. Example – Instead of eating that microwaveable processed sausage biscuit for breakfast, plan to eat a piece of whole grain toast with peanut butter and fruit smoothy.
2. **Keep unhealthy food out of the kitchen** – Purge the pantry and fridge of any unhealthy food, and when you purchase the good food keep them before your eyes. Have a bowl for fruit in your kitchen, and keep the whole food around and available to you when you are hungry. Example – If you are a snacker, then have some healthy choices, like nuts, available and ready when the urge to snack hits you, instead of some other unhealthy choice.
3. **Set small doable goals that you can accomplish** – Ask yourself – how can eat more whole, nutritious foods during breakfast, lunch, and dinner? Example – I am going to eat three more servings of vegetables this week. I will add one extra serving of veggies to dinner three nights this week. To add more fruits – I am going to enjoy a fruit based smoothie three times a week.

Plato counseled: ***“Do one thing and do it well.”*** Aim small, miss small. Start making small changes, achieve success, and build upon that. I have found that making huge and radical changes usually leaves me frustrated and not accomplishing much at all. Start with small and doable goals you can achieve.

1. **CONCLUSION**

This session concludes the class…but it is just the beginning of your personal journey into wholeness. I pray and hope that you received much out of the sessions and that you will take what you have learned and apply it to your life. God has wonderful and great things for you! Be encouraged and walk out in the grace of God the life and purpose He has gifted you with. Be the person God has called you to be and live in the triumph of Jesus Christ! God bless you, amen.

***“Thanks be to God, who always leads us forth in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.” 2 Corinthians 2:14***