

JUNE 2012

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE



Offer your
bodies as living
sacrifices, holy
and pleasing
to God.

Romans 12:1

Embodied Discipleship:
What the Bible Says About Our Bodies

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Serious Competitors



This summer, athletes and spectators will converge in London for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games. This historic tradition is believed to have begun in ancient Greece in 776 B.C.

In order to qualify for the Games in ancient Greece, competitors had to undergo a minimum of ten months in an intensive physical training program. This training involved a complex combination of exercises, including cardio-vascular, stamina, strength, and endurance routines.

In addition to the Olympic Games, athletes in ancient Greece also participated in the Isthmian, Pythian, and Nemean Games. Therefore, when the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth about self discipline and perseverance, it is not surprising that he used these serious competitors as an example.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24, Paul writes, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." In ancient Greece, winning athletes were often rewarded with large sums of money, but as Paul reminds us, only the winning athlete receives the prize. As believers, we're not competing against one another, but we should all be highly motivated by the same eternal reward. Paul wants us to keep our eyes on the prize.

He goes on to say, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1 Cor. 9:25). The athletes in ancient Greece endured strict training for mere fame and fortune. How much more should we as followers of Jesus Christ observe strict training, so that we can better know our God, walk in His ways, and receive our prize that will "never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Peter 1:4)?

Paul concludes his challenge to the Corinthians by referencing his own rigorous training: "Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 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" (1 Cor. 9:26-27).

Paul's training was not casual or haphazard. It was intentional, consistent, sometimes even painful. Let me ask you, what does your training look like? Is your body being exercised to serve your King as a tool for His Kingdom purposes, or is your body being used to serve itself, yielding temporary earthly pleasure?

As we watch the Olympic Games later this summer, I pray that God will remind us of the intense training these athletes have endured. May He challenge us to emulate their focus and self discipline as we run the most important race of our lives.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



The Importance of Jesus' Body

During its first two centuries, the early church took special care to protect the doctrine of Christ's nature. They rejected the idea that Jesus was merely a human teacher (known as Ebionism), or was a human on whom the Holy Spirit descended (known as Adoptionism). They also rejected the opposite doctrine that asserted Jesus possessed a divine nature but merely appeared to be human, (known as Docetism, from a Greek word meaning "to seem").

These one-dimensional views of Christ's nature were rejected as heresy because they did not do justice to the full scope of Christ's nature as the Bible describes it. Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man. He was the God who existed before all things and through whom "all things were made" (John 1:3). But He was also the God who became flesh and was "born of a woman, born under the law" (John 1:14; Gal. 4:4).

The fact that Jesus was "born of a woman" means that He had a human body as well as a human nature. The only remarkable thing about the Savior's physical birth was His conception. Jesus' body was formed in Mary's womb as a result of God's direct activity. She became pregnant when the power of God "would overshadow" her

(Luke 1:35; cf. Matt. 1:18). But every other aspect of His growth and development was ordinary. After His conception, Jesus went through the normal stages of fetal development until His birth. After His birth Jesus "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). He learned to walk and talk just as any other child does. He was subject to hunger, thirst, and weariness (John 4:6).

Why is it important that we believe that Jesus had a fully human, physical body? Scripture indicates that a real body was essential to Christ's mission. He did not come merely to teach or even to provide an example of godly living. Jesus came to reconcile us to God and make us holy. He could only do this by "setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations" (Eph. 2:15).

Jesus shed His blood on the cross and offered His sinless, resurrected body as a sacrifice of atonement for sin (Rom. 3:25). The fact that Jesus had a human body as well as a human nature made it possible for Him to die. As a result, those who have trusted in Christ have been reconciled to God "by Christ's physical body" and are "without blemish and free from accusation" (Col. 1:22).

For Further Study

To learn more about the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, read *Incarnation* by Alister McGrath (Fortress).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Mafter



The Write Stuff

Dear readers,

From the beginning, the ministry of *Today in the Word* has been a two-way street, a way to connect and interact with our readers. We can now say that after nearly a quarter-century of ministry, a *Today in the Word* community, a family if you will, has been formed—a community that studies the Bible and prays together. It's been a privilege for all of us at *Today in the Word* to contribute to its publication, and it's been a joy and an encouragement to read your letters. We hope that our new and improved Web site, www.todayintheword.com, will make not only your Bible study and research easier but also will expand opportunities of giving us your feedback, praying for Moody, and supporting our ministries financially. If you haven't already, please visit our Web site. We hope you'll like it!

This month, we want to highlight some of your letters and notes we've received this year. We value the opinions of our readers, and we are grateful for your heartfelt and thoughtful remarks. Thank you for your letters—we read and take into consideration all of them; none goes unnoticed. Keep studying the Bible, keep praying, and keep writing to us!

Thank you for *Today in the Word*. With it I start my day, and it is the very best daily devotional I have ever used.

—Nevelle, GA

Keep up the great work and passion you all have for the Word. I have been reading *Today in the Word* since the '80s. The best time of my day is always when I am delving into God's Word. May the Lord continue to bless your work.

—Doug (via e-mail)

This little devotional, better than anything else, has helped me understand Scripture. The people in the Bible, from the ones you always think of to the more obscure and dim, are made alive and add to a deeper appreciation of the Word.

—Joan, TN

I want to tell [January's devotional writer] Jennifer Michel how much I enjoyed her *Today in the Word* devotions. What a wonderful topic that we all struggle with in some way at times: fear. I was really blessed, encouraged, and challenged. I told my friends to check it out online. I just want Jennifer to know how the Lord used her in my life and thank her for her efforts.

—Dea (via e-mail)

Thank you for the encouraging devotional. I'm a Pastor and love the feeding I get from it. Keep up the great work!

—Richard, WV

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Paul B. Currie

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elena Maffer

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Adam Kellogg
John Koessler
Kim Pickett

WRITER
Margot Starbuck

1-800-DL MOODY
(356-6639)

www.moodyministries.net



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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Embodied Discipleship: What the Bible Says About Our Bodies

We hear the notion frequently, especially at funerals: the body is just a shell. It's the spirit that really matters. But is this completely true? Are our bodies nothing more than vessels to house our spirits for a time, or are they something more?

The Bible has much to say about the body, beginning with the truth in Genesis that they are created by God and declared "good." As we'll see, the body has much more value than a disposable container.

This month in *Today in the Word*, we'll study what God's Word teaches about the physical aspect of our being. We will see that the way we use and maintain our bodies has significance because our bodies are God's handiwork, destined for resurrection. Our bodies are part of God's redemptive plan!

We pray that this study helps you understand your body as something of great worth, the temple of the Holy Spirit! And we also thank you for your gifts that help make the teaching of *Today in the Word* available to hundreds of thousands. May the work we accomplish together bear fruit in the ministry of your heart, soul, and mind every single day!

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Created in the Image of God

In the ancient near east, reigning kings were thought to rule on behalf of a particular god. That human king was thought to reflect the *image* of a nation's god. It's how they knew what a god was like.

The first chapter of Genesis announces that every human being has been created in the image of God. This truth, called the *imago dei*, is entirely radical! For centuries, scholars have debated what it means. Some say that it's our moral capacity. Others suggest that it is our ability to reason. Others point to our function as those who rule, with God, over the earth.

No one is saying that we physically look like the God of the Israelites. No one's peeking in a mirror or thumbing through family albums saying that we've got our Father's lips or eyes or nose. That would be crazy, right? We don't even know

what He looks like. Or do we? Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus "the image of the invisible God." Hebrews 1:3 confirms, "the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." As we gaze upon Jesus, we see the One who is the spitting image of His Father.

God created
mankind in his
own image, in
the image of God
he created them;
male and female
he created them.

Genesis 1:27

That's the face and body to which we turn to discover what it looks like that we bear the *imago dei*, or the image of God. It's the way we learn what our own bodies were made for. Poring over the Gospel snapshots of Jesus, we discover that

lips are for announcing good news. Eyes and ears are meant to build relationships with sinners and saints. Arms are made for feeding and healing. And in Jesus' final wounds, we recognize that our lives and bodies, like His, are to be given in service to God's work of redemption for the world He loves.

Apply the Word

As we begin our study on what the Bible has to say about our bodies, pray that you will see more of how to follow the example of Jesus. How can you use your eyes and ears and voice to let others know that they are loved by God? Can you use your hands and feet to serve someone? Our bodies can reflect the image of God when we live like Jesus.

Pray with Us

Let's lift up in prayer our students who are serving the Lord around the world during their summer break. May God protect them from harm, and may He bring many people into a relationship with Him through their ministry.

God Calls Creation Good

“My skin is too dark,” one woman moans. Another whines, “I’m so pale.” A man complains, “I’m too tall for this seat!” Another whispers, “I wish I was just a bit taller.”

Daily in our culture, men, women, and children are bombarded with messages that we’re too fat, too thin, too tall, too short, too dark, too light. In order to sell us products to fix whatever is “wrong” with us, advertisers have capitalized off the oldest trick in the book: they’ve imitated the hiss of the enemy in the Garden of Eden!

In Genesis 3, the serpent suggests to Eve that things could be a little better for her if she just ate the fruit of the tree. Doubting the word of God, Eve took the bait. Eyes opened, Adam and Eve experienced shame for the first time. Shame is that voice that hisses that there’s something wrong with us, that we’re not

quite acceptable the way we are. Our legs are shaped wrong, our teeth are too yellow, our hair is too gray, and our skin is too loose.

God’s Word liberates us from this kind of shame, lies, and deception. Over and over in Genesis 1, God announces that His creation is *good* (vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). It wasn’t a qualified good—that creation was only good on sunny days or when the land was particularly fruitful. It wasn’t just good when men’s muscles were firm and women’s skin was flawless. No, God looked over all that He had made and without reservation or qualification called it *good*.

To cling to the truth that God’s creation—children and women and men—have been created *good*, by God, is entirely countercultural today. This is truth worth holding on to tightly!

God saw all that
he had made, and
it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

Apply the Word

When Jesus was confronted by Satan and tempted to follow a lie, He responded with the truth of God’s Word (see Matthew 4). When you hear the lie of the Enemy declaring, “You’re just not good enough,” remember that lies are silenced by truth. This week, speak aloud the truth of Scripture: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

Pray with Us

It is our privilege to pray for Collin Lambert, Vice President of Moody Radio. Join us in asking the Lord to give Collin wisdom as he leads his teams in creating and delivering biblical programming to listeners around the world.

God Cares About Our Suffering

Though he looked the part, Daniel Walker was not a typical Western visitor to brothels in Asia. Playing the part of a lonely tourist, Walker was actually an undercover agent investigating the sex trade industry in various locations around the globe. Knowing his life would be in danger if he were exposed, Walker was moved by more than a paycheck. In his book *God in a Brothel*, it becomes clear that Walker's overriding motivation to rescue girls and women trapped in this brutal form of slavery was God's great love for each and every one of them.

The Israelites
groaned in their
slavery and cried
out, and their cry
for help . . . went
up to God.

Exodus 2:23

own experience of suffering—it would have been tempting to give up hope in the God who had called them His own. And yet, instead of relinquishing trust, the Hebrew people continued to cry out to God for deliverance for four hundred years. The One who loved them heard their cries, saw their misery, and was concerned for their suffering (Ex. 3:7).

In the midst of suffering, it's tempting to believe that God does not care or that God has abandoned us. The truth is that bodies which are used and abused, broken and beaten, matter deeply to God. God does not turn away from the suffering of a young woman being trafficked for profit. God does not ignore the cries of the needy. Rather, the One who used Moses to deliver his people out of captivity is the One to whom you can turn in the midst of suffering. God sees your suffering and hears your cries.

Apply the Word

When we are in pain, the Enemy hisses to our hearts that God is absent or that God does not care for us. The very nature of God, though, is to be deeply concerned for those who suffer. Today, turn your face toward God's. Expect God's compassionate gaze and listening ear. Knowing that God cares deeply for you, pour out your heart to Him.

Pray with Us

In our prayers for Moody Radio, remember the Production team: Joseph Carlson, William Davis, Jon Hemmer, Eric Hufford, and Joshua Klos. They contribute to producing national programs like *Midday Connection* and *Chris Fabry Live!*

God Is a Faithful Provider

What is the distinction between prudence and planning ahead, and fundamental ambivalence about whether or not God can or will provide? Several clues might reveal the true state of our hearts. Do we trust our investment portfolio for our retirement years, or do we believe that God holds our days in His hands? Do we hold tightly to our resources, or do we believe that our God can multiply five loaves of bread and two fish to feed a multitude when we release our resources to Him? Most basically, do we worry, or are we content?

I will rain down
bread from
heaven for you.

Exodus 16:4

When God's people grumbled against Him in the wilderness, griping about the limited menu options, God seized the opportunity as a teachable moment. Yes, God provided food, raining down bread in the morning and meat in the evenings. But God wanted more for His people than full bellies. Namely, God

wanted them to trust Him to provide just what they needed. He longed for hearts that would be turned toward His. In their desert training ground, the Hebrews wouldn't receive less than they needed and they wouldn't receive more.

God's heart for every one of His children is to receive exactly what we need. This includes our basic bodily need for food, which can also reveal something about our spiritual condition. God longs for those who eat little—whether wrestling

with body-image issues or poverty—to receive what our bodies need. God longs for those who eat much—conditioned by a culture of indulgence to satisfy the palate—to receive what our bodies need. In each situation, we learn to trust God as a faithful Provider. And as we receive what we truly need, our bodies *and* our souls are strengthened.

Apply the Word

If you live with little, God longs for your heart to trust Him. If you live with abundance, God longs for your heart to trust Him. What will it look like to trust God as a Provider? It might mean consuming a little less and it might mean sharing a little more. As the Spirit directs you, consider each meal you eat as a testament to God's provision for all your needs.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Moody Radio's Production team, please ask the Lord to bless Lee Rugen, Christopher Segard, Joel Swan, and Steven Tabor for their dedication to proclaiming God's truth to millions of people every day.

God Provides Sabbath for Our Good

Included in *Advertising Century's* top one hundred advertising campaigns of the century is Coca-Cola's 1929 slogan, "The Pause That Refreshes." In 1935 Coke tweaked the popular campaign by identifying their product as "The pause that brings friends together." Like so much marketing that makes big promises, the ad promised customers relief and relationships. Though no sugary carbonated beverage could possibly deliver on it, they had tapped into the deep longing of every heart.

You may know
that I am the
LORD, who makes
you holy.

Exodus 31:13

After being delivered out of bondage to the Egyptians—having labored day in and day out for over four centuries—the Israelites sojourned through the desert for forty long years. During that time, God gave them the Law in order to teach them how they had been created to live. Having been abused, attacked, and denigrated by the Egyptians, God's beloved people needed to learn what it meant to

be fully human. Central to God's Law and the Ten Commandments was the command to observe a weekly Sabbath rest. It was, the Lord announced, to be a sign of God's covenant, which would be passed down through the generations.

God, who Himself rested on the seventh day "and was refreshed," invites those who trust Him to rest from labor (v. 17). Hands that are busy for six days are invited to drop work tools and rest. Minds that are busy for six days are welcomed to leave burdens and find refreshment. To choose

rest is to choose life.

This gift that God has given is the authentic "product"—the "Real Thing"—that meets our deepest needs. The refreshment of our spirits and bodies, as well as the sacred space for relationship with God and others, is the good gift God offers—and shares!—with us.

Apply the Word

Ad campaigns like Coke's "The Real Thing" tap into the authentic longing of our hearts for meaning and purpose and relationship with God. Notice the ways that *products* promise to fulfill needs that only God can fulfill. You resist this pervasive—and persuasive!—lie when you commit both your spirit and your body to observe God's ordained season of rest.

Pray with Us

Will you pray for Frank Leber, Vice President of Information Systems? Frank oversees the technology utilized by Moody's education, radio, and publishing ministries. May he experience God's mercy and grace while he leads Information Systems today.

The Lord Looks at the Heart

When researchers at Duke University studied the pressures felt by female students, they discovered the phrase women used for their experience: the myth of effortless perfection. They were expected to appear physically attractive, get the best grades, and be involved in activities on-campus and off-campus. Not only were they expected to be perfect, they were also expected to make it appear as if they hadn't tried at all. Talk about pressure!

People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

God judges differently than we do. When God rejected Saul as king over Israel, the hunt was on for a new king. Knowing Saul's fierce reputation, the prophet Samuel was scared to be used as God's agent for the job. Step by step, though, God led Samuel toward the one who would succeed Saul.

When Jesse and his sons joined Samuel at the sacrifice in Bethlehem, Samuel looked over each one. The oldest Eliab

was tall and handsome; Samuel was certain he was royal material. God corrected Samuel, confirming that He looks not on the outside, but on the inside.

Notice that David is also described as having "a fine appearance" (v. 12). But these physical features weren't why God selected David to be the leader of His people. God values our bodies—all bodies, not just the ones that fit cultural standards of attractiveness. But God doesn't value physical features over spiritual

traits. David was not anointed to be king because he was handsome, but rather because of his heart (see 1 Sam. 13:14).

We're tempted to judge people by how physically attractive they are. But followers of Jesus, those whose lives are being transformed by the Holy Spirit, develop a different kind of *holy* vision. With the eyes of our hearts, we begin to see others the way that God sees them.

Apply the Word

God judges the heart and not the face. This should change the way we see others and also the way we look into the mirror! Bombarded by messages that worth is linked to appearance, God's Word reminds us that He looks somewhere else entirely. The next time you want to criticize your appearance, remember that God is more concerned about your heart.

Pray with Us

Continuing our focus on Information Systems, we invite you to pray for Programming Support: Sherman Jules, John Kim, Gina Lee, Juan Lemus-Tunche, and Vinod Malachi. Praise God for their dedication in using their technical skills to serve the Lord.

Bodies Respond in Faithfulness to God

More than 15 million people have seen the acclaimed traveling exhibit called “Bodies.” The show features over 200 actual human bodies, revealing the marvel of the human being. From skin to bones to muscles to lungs, visitors “see how positively amazing the body is—how the pulleys, fulcrums and levers we know as muscles, joints and bones let us function continuously without even thinking about it.” The exhibit testifies to our Creator.

The elaborate production prompts the question, “What are these bodies for?” Many say, “They’re made for pleasure!” Scripture suggests otherwise—they are for so much more! And our Creator gives us instructions for how to use these intricate machines through which we dwell, in His commands given to Moses at Mount Sinai.

The Ten Commandments were to be the framework that formed the Hebrew

people. Exhortations to serve God alone and honor the Sabbath would form their spirits, and they also prescribed the physical motions for their bodies. Having been enslaved by the Egyptians for four hundred years, the Hebrew people had not had charge of their own bodies and labor. Now they were radically free, and God provided boundaries to guide and protect them.

Knees should bow only to Yahweh. Lips, also, should praise only Him. Hands, busy six days and resting one, aren’t to be used for crafting idols. They’re not to be used for murder or

stealing, either. And private parts are dedicated to one’s spouse alone.

The heart-worship of God is never separate from the bodily worship of a living God. The heart turned toward God guides the body into righteousness, and the practices of the body tip the human heart toward God.

You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Exodus 20:17

Apply the Word

Faith in God was never meant to be just a cerebral exercise. Rather, God invites us to practice faithfulness with our bodies! This week, does the work of your hands bring God glory? Does your mouth speak praise and not false witness? Use your body, heart, and mind to serve Him!

Pray with Us

Continue to pray for Programming Support—Pepi Manieson, Diane Rogers, and John Saucedo—that the Father give this team unity through His Spirit as they work together to manage Moody’s databases and software systems.

Bodies Are to Be Used for God's Glory

Lawrence enjoyed being retired from his job. During the day he would swing a hammer on a building project, or lunch with a local club for business people. Some evenings he would join friends to sing. What made Lawrence different from some other retired friends was that he had offered himself and gifts entirely to the Lord. His hands built accessibility ramps for those using wheelchairs. His arms welcomed visiting business travelers from abroad into his home. His voice was lifted both by singing with his church choir and also by sharing the gospel to prisoners he visited faithfully every week.

God gives individuals gifts to be used for building His kingdom, and our passage today in Exodus illustrates this beautifully. The construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings—the dwelling place for God's presence!—was assigned to various individuals

whom God had gifted with skill to do various work. Not only had God given Bezalel artistic skills to shape gold and silver and bronze, God had also gifted him as a wise leader who could teach others. God had also given people the gifts to engrave, to design, to embroider and to weave. While these craftspeople probably earned an income at their given jobs, their talents found fullest expression in the work God had given them to do.

God still gives gifts for the building of His kingdom! In addition to those we know as pastors and

ministers, engineers use their skills to develop irrigation systems for people in parched places. Designers design affordable shoes for those with few resources. Retirees bring good news to those in prison. The gifts God gives find fullest expression as they're given to His kingdom purposes.

He has filled him
with the Spirit of
God, with wisdom
. . . and with all
kinds of skills
to make artistic
designs.

Exodus 36:31–32

Apply the Word

The gifts God has given you are unique. Chances are they look nothing like the gifts the Lord has given to your pastor or your sister or your mail carrier! Notice the very particular ways God has made and gifted you and prayerfully consider how *your* gifts might be used to further God's kingdom. Then go ahead and use them!

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Greg Thornton, Senior Vice President of Media. Express appreciation in prayer for Greg's godly leadership, and ask the Lord to use Greg to accomplish His will through the ministries of Moody Radio and Moody Publishers.

Paying It Forward (and Backward)

The movie *Pay It Forward* introduced the innovative idea of a boy named Trevor McKinney. When Trevor's social studies teacher assigned students to conjure up something to change the world and put it into action, Trevor turned around "paying a favor *back*" to "paying a favor *forward*." Trevor's efforts ended up transforming the lives of those around him. The movie is based on the premise that, more often than not, unless we purpose to live differently, our behaviors are often self-serving. It takes thought and intentionality and effort to love others the way we love ourselves. This is exactly the way God has invited us to live.

When God's people, delivered out of bondage in Egypt, were still sojourning in the wilderness, God gave them an extensive set of laws so that they would know what it was to live in freedom. Anticipating natural human resistance,

God preempted the expected stubbornness by adding an explanation to many of them. Command after command detailed in Deuteronomy concludes, "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this" (see v. 22). These commandments ranged from everything from how to harvest one's fields, as in our reading today, to whom to invite to your house for a festival celebration. Specifically, God was asking His people to remember and include foreigners and orphans and widows.

Looking backward, God was asking His people to pay it forward. Yes, caring for these ones who God loves was kind of like "payback" for God's mighty Red Sea deliverance out of slavery. It was also the new social pattern, by which the world would be blessed, that God was establishing through Israel.

Leave what
remains for the
foreigner, the
fatherless and
the widow.

Deuteronomy 24:21

Apply the Word

Perhaps you will never glean a field or celebrate a Jewish feast day. But when you "harvest" your paycheck, do you remember those who are hungry? When you offer hospitality, do you remember those who get few invitations? Providing for the bodies of the hungry, and sharing our homes with the poor, are ways that we honor God.

Pray with Us

Moody Publishers Sales team would be grateful for your prayer support. Please join us in asking the Lord to grant success to Michael Davis and Gene Eble as they work with retailers and booksellers around the country.

We Praise God with Our Bodies

Does this sound familiar? A worship leader reads Scripture, and though he correctly pronounces every word, his tone is flat and his face is expressionless. Then the congregation sings a familiar song, singing each note with perfunctory precision. They listen to a sermon with a three-part outline, perhaps occasionally taking notes. True words are preached and spoken and sung. But everything seems geared for the heads of the worshipers, not their hearts and certainly not their bodies.

The worship of God's people, after they had returned from Babylonian exile, was anything but a dry, cerebral exercise. Israel was exuberant both because they had received God's salvation, and also because they had been authorized by God to clean house among their former oppressors. Israel rejoiced in the King—capital "K"—with the confidence that God would also work through an earthly—small "k"—king of His choos-

ing. Humbled, without earthly resources, God's worshipers acknowledged their utter dependence upon the Lord.

The worship of Israel sounds less like a university lecture and more like a party! Everyone gathered so that God's name could be praised with dancing. The jangling of tambourine and harp resonated with God's praise. Singing for joy, God's people responded to His love and mercy with their whole beings.

Today, we are invited to worship God with our whole beings. While we may not be part of a congregation that worships with tambourines and harps and dance, we can still offer our bodies as instruments of praise. Sitting, we embody a humble posture before God. Standing, we rise to honor Him. Singing, we offer back the breath He first breathed into our lungs. With our bodies, with our entire beings, we worship God.

Sing to the LORD
a new song.

Psalm 149:1

Apply the Word

This week, consider a bodily practice that is different from your own church tradition. If you're part of a hand-raising body, drop to your knees in prayer. If you're part of a more liturgical kneeling tradition, raise your arms to the Lord during your personal devotions. And if physical disability limits your movement, join God's people who sang for joy on their beds!

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Moody Publishers' Sales team, please pray that Stephen Gemeiner, Laurence Rogers, and Roger Williams will be able to clearly and effectively communicate Moody Publishers' products to the marketplace.

God Uses a Human Family

In order to understand better the lives of friends with disabilities, some have practiced exercises to know what their lives are like. One woman wore a blindfold and allowed herself to be led around by another. Another tried to function throughout the day without speaking. A man tried to navigate unwieldy terrain using only his arms and a wheelchair. By trying to place themselves in someone else's shoes—or wheelchair—they do end up having a richer appreciation for what their friends' lives are like.

This is how
the birth of Jesus
the Messiah
came about.

Matthew 1:18

For reasons wholly divine, God chose to take on human flesh to know what our lives are like. The author of Hebrews confirms that, in His Incarnation, Jesus experienced temptation and suffering and death in order to serve as a faithful high priest on our behalf (Heb. 2:9–18).

Matthew's Gospel, more than any other, weaves in Old Testament promises that identify Jesus as the Messiah. Here, Matthew confirms the unlikely possibility that had been predicted through the prophet Isaiah—that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son—had at last been realized in the birth of Jesus (see Isa. 7:14). He would, said Isaiah, bear the name "Immanuel," meaning "God with us."

The name "Immanuel," exalting God's with-ness, is integral to who God is.

This is the one who was with the Hebrew people in the wilderness, in a pillar of fire by night and a cloud of smoke by day. It is the One whose presence moved with His people in the tabernacle. Now, in the skin of Jesus, God has come to earth in order to be fully present to His people. Working and sweating and eating, crying and grieving and suffering, Jesus knows exactly what our lives are like.

Apply the Word

We imitate Jesus' ministry of incarnation as we move, in love, into the worlds that others inhabit. To whom is God calling you today? Are there ones who would be blessed by your presence among them? Whether you're called to cross barriers of language, culture, income, or disability, ask God how you might be called to share life with the ones He loves.

Pray with Us

Focus your prayers on Lloyd Dodson, Vice President of Corporate Projects and Human Resources. Among other tasks, Lloyd guides Moody's efforts in the recruitment of faculty and staff. Ask God to continue bringing the right people to Moody to serve Christ.

God Took on Flesh to Be with Us

In the War on Terror, the U.S. Navy SEALs have been utilized in many covert operations. In one of these operations, the SEALs, flown in by helicopter, stormed the room where American hostages were being held captive, finding the hostages terrified, curled up in a corner. When they beckoned the hostages to leave, none would budge. Then one of the SEALs put down his weapon, took off his helmet, and curled up tightly next to the other hostages, getting so close his body was touching some of theirs.

He softened the look on his face and put his arms around them. Eventually every hostage was willing to follow him to freedom.

In order to be liberated, the prisoners needed to believe that each of their liberators was “one of them.” John says that when the true light came into the world, the world did not recognize Him. To become one of us, to win

our trust, He chose to live among us. When John announces, “The Word became flesh,” the verb for became indicates that the One who was the Word already existed and transitioned to take on human flesh. This was no in-and-out rescue operation. Rather, dipping down from heaven to be like us, He made His home among us. As “one of us,” Jesus experienced all that we experience. He attended parties with sinners and saints. He laughed with His friends and He wept with them. And in the end, He faced

physical death just as every one of us will. Because He knows exactly what our lives are like, we’re able to trust Him.

The rest of John’s Gospel describes the details of Jesus’ encounters among us. Sidled up beside us, He proves himself worthy of trust. Those who stand to follow Him experience liberation from sin and death. Thanks be to God!

The Word became
flesh and made
his dwelling
among us.

John 1:14

Apply the Word

Just as Jesus came near to know what our lives are like, He invites us to draw near to others in His name. This week, consider one person who is held hostage by the powers of sin and death. Purpose to enter into that one’s life, meeting his or her eyes and proving yourself to be worthy of trust.

Pray with Us

Let’s support Procurement Services in prayer. May God give discernment to Paul Brackley, Brenda Crump, Fenton Johnson, and Ed Jordan as they work with vendors and assist Moody in purchasing equipment and supplies.

Jesus Was Tempted As We Are

A child riding in his mother's shopping cart grabs a pack of gum when she's busy paying the cashier. A young woman has maxed out her credit card, but decides to buy just "one more thing." In the quiet of his home, though he's promised both himself and his wife he would stop, a middle-aged man powers on a computer holding images that will harm his relationships.

Tempted—driven by our feelings—we reach for that which we think will satisfy.

Between the Dead Sea and the inhabitable part of Judea was a dry, dusty wilderness. Its name, *Jeshimmon*, means "devastation." Simmering with dry heat, its cliffs reached up to 1,200 feet. In Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Scripture called *The Message*, he says Jesus was in this wilderness for "the Test," which the devil was ready to give. Peterson continues, "Jesus prepared for the test by fasting forty

days and nights (Matt. 4:1–3). Though modern readers might easily imagine that the forty days of fasting was the test, Jesus was preparing His spirit for the actual exam!

"The Test" Satan delivers is the same kind we face. "Can you really trust in what your Father provides? You can turn this stone to bread!" "Do you really believe you're God's Son? Prove it!" "Why wait? Worship me and all this can be yours!" Though the desert is the

geographical antithesis of the fullness of the Garden of Eden, the scene resonates with Eve's temptation, when the serpent slyly suggests, "Are you sure God's got your back? Reach for the fruit!"

Today, we stand between the desert and the first Garden, faced with the same temptations. May our voices join Jesus' in saying, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (v. 8).

It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."

Luke 4:4

Apply the Word

Most of us can recognize some ways we are tempted by the deceiver. Whether we're tempted to reach for a pint of ice cream or to swallow a drink from a bottle, we—like Jesus—can trust in our Father's faithfulness. Today, find one opportunity to join Jesus, saying to temptation, "No thanks, I'll trust in what my Father provides."

Pray with Us

Join us in thanking God for bringing Steven Mogck to Moody Bible Institute to serve in the role of Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Ask God to equip Steven with everything he needs to lead his teams well.

Baptism Is a Sign of Belonging

In the earliest centuries of the faith, Christians in Africa resisted the temptation to deny their faith in a unique way. Persecuted by conquerors hungry for power, Ethiopian Christians, and later Egyptian ones, branded their hands and foreheads with various Christian symbols. In addition to making it more difficult to deny their faith, these symbols gave believers strength during difficult times. Their bodies marked their belonging to Jesus.

Through the ages, the bodies of God's people have been marked in various ways. In establishing His covenant with Abraham, God commanded that every male in Abraham's household be circumcised (Gen. 17:10–14). For several thousand years, Jewish male babies were circumcised at the age of eight days, a physical sign of being part of the Jewish people.

After Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the body of believers

who had experienced salvation through Him—both Jews and Gentiles had to figure out if circumcision, or becoming Jewish first, was required for Gentile Christians. We already know how this one ended, as circumcision is not requisite for male converts today! The bodily sign today, which God has established and blessed, is baptism. This physical action identifies someone as belonging to Jesus. Baptism is also a marker to remind us of God's claim on our lives.

When John baptized repentant Jews in the Jordan, he balked when Jesus requested baptism. Though the act didn't cleanse Jesus—the sinless One—from sin, it identified Him as God's chosen one. This was confirmed by a voice from heaven, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (v. 17). Today Christians are marked and claimed as God's own through baptism. This action marks our belonging, and belovedness, to Jesus' Father.

This is my Son,
whom I love.

Matthew 3:17

Apply the Word

Return to the memory of your own baptism. Reflect on the ways that God responded in love to Jesus' baptism, and remember that He also extends that love to you. Though we may not hear an audible voice, what signs of God's love surround you? As you think about the ways God shows you love, thank Him for the gift of His blessing and favor.

Pray with Us

While you pray, please mention Donor Communications: Paul Currie and Kim Pickett. Let's request that God give them creativity and insight as they work on publications for Moody's ministry partners.

Question and Answer

Dr. Winfred Omar Neely, Professor of Pastoral Studies



My church teaches that a person can lose their salvation. Do you think this is true?



This is a question many have wrestled with, but it needs more precision. We must ask, “Is it possible for a person who is *truly* saved to lose their salvation?” The answer is no. Jesus says, “My sheep [those people who are truly saved] listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish” (John 10:27–28). The expression translated “never” is the strongest negative in the Greek language. Jesus declares that His sheep will never ever—under any circumstances—perish. The true believer in Christ is safe and secure for all eternity (John 6:38–40; Rom. 8:28–39) and can never be lost! Salvation is a work of God, and He will bring to completion His work in every true follower of Christ (Phil 1:6).



Will a person who is truly saved continue to walk in obedience to Christ?



The person who is truly saved will continue to grow in the faith. The Lord says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (John 8:31). Paul writes, “He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death

to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm” (Col. 1:22–23). The author of Hebrews notes: “We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end” (Heb. 3:14). Some have construed these passages to teach that it is possible to lose our eternal salvation. But this is not the teaching of these texts at all; they teach that continuing in the faith is the test of and evidence for the reality of Christ’s saving work in our lives. These Scriptures also warn those who waver and those whose lives do not demonstrate a growing faith that their profession of belief in Jesus might be empty. A life without growing obedience to the Word of God is a life void of the reality of conversion and new life in Christ.



Sometimes my feelings and inner impressions about an issue are at odds with the clear teaching of the Bible. What am I to do?



Every believer in Christ has probably experienced this at one time or another. We are to trust the clear teaching of God’s Word and not our impressions! The supreme standard and ultimate authority for Christian thinking, living, and dying is the Bible and not our feeling (Deut. 6:6–9; Ezra 7:10; Matt.

Continued on next page

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4:1–11; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). Feelings come and go; they can be easily provoked and manipulated, and they are woefully inadequate as standard for living. Stand by faith on God’s Word, and you will discover the truth of the words of the hymn: “How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.”



As a Christian, then, do my feelings even matter?



Of course they do. God created us with feelings and emotions, but the Bible’s objective teachings are to inform, shape, and train our feelings. God wants us to *think* and *feel* in certain ways about good and evil. We are to love righteousness and hate iniquity (Heb. 1:9).

Feeling biblically grows out of thinking biblically. As our thinking is transformed over time we begin to rejoice at that which pleases God, and hate the things that displease God. Growth in the areas of feeling biblically about life is called our *affective* worldview (the way we see the world). Understanding God’s Word ought to shape the way we think and feel about God, people, and life in general. For more help with this issue I recommend reading the classic books, *Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards or the *Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis.



What is the significance of the “el” in biblical names?



The Hebrew word for God is “el.” When you encounter names in your Bible reading that have “el” in them, the name in question points to God’s character, person, and work in some way. Note the following examples: Michael (Who is like God – Dan. 12.1); Daniel (My Judge is God – Dan. 1:8); Eliezer (My God is help – Ex. 18:4); Elizabeth (the oath of God – Luke 1:5); Elijah (My God is the Lord – 1 Kings 17:1); Elimelech (My God is king – Ruth 1:2); and Immanuel (God with us – Matt. 1:23). Much truth is packed into these names!



Would you please explain what “Hallelujah” means?



The word *Hallelujah* is a wonderful Hebrew term, composed of two parts: (1) Hallelu, the Hebrew imperative meaning praise, and (2) Jah, a shortened form of God’s sacred name, Yahweh, translated in English as LORD. Hallelujah means “praise the LORD” or “praise Yahweh.” Hallelujah is used many times in the Old Testament, usually translated as “praise the LORD.” Psalms 146 through 150 are Hallelujah Psalms, calling us to praise the LORD.

Fasting Makes Space for Holiness

“Sit down and eat your chicken, rice, green beans, and salad.” One mother saying these words to her child might mean: “You’ve eaten so little today. I am telling you to sit down at this dinner table and eat the amount and kinds of food that will nourish your body. The same words to a different child might mean something else, however. The exact same command might mean, “You have already eaten so much *junk* today! I am telling you to sit down at this dinner table and eat the amount and kinds of food that will nourish your body.”

The words of Jesus in our text today about instructions on fasting might mean something different to Jesus’ first audience than for us today. Though the Day of Atonement was the only requisite day of Jewish fasting, the faithful would also fast for various occasions including mourning, repentance, or even national penitence. Some would make a great

show of their fasting to be seen by others; they would look unkempt and even don pale makeup to emphasize their pallor. Jesus exhorted these people to freshen up! Fasting which is invisible to others, Jesus promised, is recognized by God.

When you fast,
do not look
somber as the
hypocrites do.

Matthew 6:16

What’s striking from a twenty-first century perspective is that Jesus assumes His audience is fasting! Fasting wasn’t an ancient regulation with no bearing on the Christian life. Rather, the message for believers today is

that God recognizes the heart of those who—discreetly!—forego food or drink, or Facebook or television, in order to focus their attention on things of God.

Jesus’ word to us today about fasting might remind us to take up this practice in order to deepen our relationship with God. We do this to please our Father, not to impress anyone around us by our show of holiness.

Apply the Word

Do you ever practice fasting? Whether you choose to forego food and drink from sunup to sundown (like first-century Jews) or whether you take a break from a television show, God invites you to connect with Him through fasting. As the Spirit leads, consider what you might give up for a time in order to create more space in your life to spend with God.

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for James Hickman and Johnny Wu serving in Campus Network Support. Please ask the Father to give these men joy and fulfillment in serving Him.

Bread That Truly Satisfies

A bread delivery truck, filled with the warm aroma of sweet bread, pulls away from the bakery. At his first stop, an Italian restaurant, the driver unloads round rolls, to be shared by lovers during a candlelit dinner. Then, pulling up to a grocery store, he delivers loaves of bread that will be shared by families and friends and neighbors. At his third stop, a campus market, he leaves bagels, which provide quick nourishment for busy students on the run. Though each eater has different needs, each one will be satisfied.

Jesus took
bread . . . saying,
“Take and eat; this
is my body.”

Matthew 26:26

reflects the same needs Jesus’ followers experience today when we come to Him.

To the disciples—and to us—Jesus says, “Take and eat; this is my body” (v. 26). With the gift that Jesus gives, we receive the affection of One who loves us. We experience fellowship—communion!—with Him. In the gift we are strengthened, given renewed energy, to be His faithful people in the world. In Jesus’ body, given for us, we experience the One

who truly satisfies.

When Jesus shared His final meal with His disciples, He knew that their needs would differ in the days to come. One, who would deny Him, will feel guilty and ashamed. Another will suffer confusion and doubt. Another might weep uncontrollably; they are likely to feel anger and disappointment. The range of needs experienced by His first disciples—both in His presence and His absence—

The gift that Jesus gave to His disciples, and the gift He offered freely on the cross, is the gift of Himself. As we receive the bread and the cup, we celebrate the fact that Jesus lives in us and works through us. At the table our bodies are nourished by Jesus to be sent out as those who bear His presence in the world.

Apply the Word

Various Christian traditions have different views of the Lord’s Supper, yet all agree that when we partake of the bread and the cup we are strengthened, encouraged again and again, to be God’s faithful people in the world. At the table Jesus strengthens our bodies, and through the Holy Spirit even lives in them, so that He might bless the world through us.

Pray with Us

Dr. Larry Davidhizar, Vice President and Dean of the Undergraduate School, would appreciate your prayers. Let’s pray that God would refresh his spirit and energize him for the upcoming academic year.

Jesus' Disciples Anointed and Healed

Many Christians anoint the sick. This practice was observed in Jesus' day too. A sinful woman anointed Jesus before His suffering and crucifixion, and was commended by the Lord. The faithful women who had shared His life and ministry anointed His body before its burial. When Jesus sent out His twelve disciples to minister and share the gospel, they also shared the practice of anointing, in this case to heal the sick.

To pour or smear perfumed oil or water on someone, anointing symbolized the presence and power of the divine. In the Old Testament, anointing identified the ones who were chosen as God's divine agents. When Samuel anointed David as king over Israel, the sign of anointing was equivalent to a crown (see 1 Samuel 16). The high priest and various prophets were also marked as God's anointed, setting them apart for the work they had been called to do.

The One who would reign in eternity as prophet, priest, and king was Jesus. The word *Christ* means "anointed one." Both the pouring of costly perfumed oil over Jesus in the home of a Pharisee and also the anointing of Jesus' body for burial served as signs that Jesus is the One chosen as God's holy agent of redemption.

When Jesus sent out His twelve disciples, they anointed those they encountered who were sick, and many were healed (see James 5:14).

Approved in 1563, The Heidelberg Catechism

asks those being initiated into the faith, "But why art thou called a Christian?" The catechist answers, "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing." To identify with Christ's anointing is to agree to be used like His early disciples, as prophetic, priestly, and royal agents in the world today.

[The disciples] anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Mark 6:13

Apply the Word

The physical act of anointing makes visible the anointing that is the privilege of all believers. It symbolizes God's power and presence. Through His death and resurrection Jesus accomplished the once-and-for-all work of the royal, priestly, and prophetic offices. The work of the church today is to continue the work and mission He has given us to do.

Pray with Us

Ask the Holy Spirit to encourage faculty in the Educational Ministries department at Moody's Chicago campus. May the Lord minister to Gina Behrens, Timothy Downey, Dennis Fledderjohann, Christina Greiner, and Nancy Kane.

Loving with All That We Are

Judging from the list of best-selling books in recent years, people are desperate to find the key to success and happiness. *The Secret* shot to the top of the lists after Oprah Winfrey endorsed its message of visualizing success. Titles that promise the formula for winning at life, or for finding the most important thing in your life, are almost always guaranteed an audience.

Jesus had a “key” to the question of what was most important in life. Impressed by Jesus’ answers while debating some Sadducees, one first-century thinker—a teacher of the law—wanted to know how Jesus would answer that question. Though he certainly had his own opinions, he was curious to see what the popular teacher would say. He asked Jesus to identify the most important commandment of all. Jesus answered, “Hear, O Israel: The

Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (vv. 29–30; see Deut. 6:4–5). Echoing the wisdom of God recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus confirmed that love is not a matter of feeling warm fuzzies in our hearts, but is about responding to God with our whole beings, even our bodies! This is the most important thing we can do in our lives.

Each one of us will have to answer this question about “the most important thing.” Specifically, we will have to answer it in the way we live our lives. As our hearts are turned toward God, as our souls respond to Him, as our minds are shaped by Him, and as we dedicate our bodies to His service, we love Him with all that we are.

Love the Lord
your God . . . with
all your strength.

Mark 12:30

Apply the Word

Though Jesus invites us to love God with all that we are, most of us are predisposed to express love in a particular way. If you’re a person who actively loves God with your body—serving like Jesus did—quiet your body today to love God with your heart, mind, and soul. If you’re more contemplative, ask Jesus how you might love God with your body!

Pray with Us

Continuing to pray for our faculty serving in the Educational Ministries department: Robert MacRae, Michael Milco, Elizabeth Smith, and Peter Worrall. May God use them to bless future youth pastors, teachers, and counselors.

Bodies Made Well As a Sign of the Messiah

A popular television show, *Say Yes to the Dress*, films brides-to-be as they search for the perfect wedding dress. The bridal salon attendant, hoping to close a sale, will notice when the woman appears to love a particular gown and will ask, “Is this *The One*? Is this your dress?” Her entourage of friends and family, as well as viewers at home, hold their breath waiting for answer. Will she say this is the one perfect gown of her dreams? Will she say yes to the dress?

After John the Baptist had been imprisoned, he heard reports from his disciples that Jesus’ popularity was growing and His message about the inbreaking of a new kingdom was spreading. Though John had long ago recognized that his cousin had been designated by God, he now wanted to be sure that Jesus was in fact the One, the longed-for Messiah. Curious, yet stuck behind prison bars, he sent messengers to find out.

Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.

Luke 7:21

If the bride-to-be declares that this is not the right dress, she can keep looking for something else. In much the same way, if the person in question—Jesus—doesn’t behave like the long-awaited One, then, the searcher can keep looking for the authentic fulfillment of God’s promise.

So when John’s disciples arrived, they asked Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” (v. 18).

Rather than insisting, “I’m the One! I’m the One!” Jesus pointed to the works He had been doing. He was saying in essence,

“Tell John that those whose bodies and lives were broken are made well.” The report would have evoked, both for John and his disciples, the rich images Isaiah used to describe God’s suffering servant, the “one who was to come” (see Isa. 61:1–2). The restoration of physical bodies was the sign that Jesus was, indeed, the One God had sent!

Apply the Word

We can look back to Jesus’ first-century healings to recognize His power, and we can witness it in the lives of our neighbors today. Where do you see Jesus’ active power to restore lives at work in the world today? Deliverance from addiction, healing from disease, and restoration of relationships are all part of the work of the Lord.

Pray with Us

Join us in expressing gratitude to God for Dr. Junias Venugopal, Provost and Dean of Education. Thank God for his experience in education and international missions that has prepared him to lead Moody’s undergraduate school and seminary.

The Surprisingly Blessed Body

Professor Jeffery Sobal studies culturally determined ideas about body size and shape. In one article he described the reaction of South Pacific islanders to *Blue Hawaii*, a movie starring Elvis Presley. While North Americans tend to value thin, firm bodies, the islanders prefer stocky, curvy women. Sobal explains, “They couldn’t understand why he spent all his time chasing the skinny blonde in the bikini.” They thought her friend was a better catch.

Not only do different society’s values conflict with each other, they can also conflict with kingdom values. In Jesus’ culture, women were valued for what their bodies could do. Fertile women who were able to produce many offspring were esteemed. Infertile women who were unable to bear children experienced the weight of cultural shame. As an example of this value system, one woman in the crowd shouted

Blessed rather are
those who hear
the word of God
and obey it.

Luke 11:28

out a common blessing to Jesus, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you!” (v. 27). It was intended as a high compliment.

Jesus’ response inverts this compliment to change values and priorities.

Throughout the Gospels, we witness a culture’s discrimination against those whose bodies are disabled, and we also see Jesus moving toward those who are blind and deaf, toward those who are bent and paralyzed. He brings the values of a new kingdom.

Notice that this woman’s compliment wasn’t bad—the ability to bear and nurture children is a marvelous gift. But it is not the greatest gift. Kingdom values—hearing and obeying God’s Word—trumps even the most wonderful thing human bodies can do. Jesus affirms that true blessedness is accessible to all who turn toward God’s truth.

Apply the Word

Are you aware of what your society values about bodies? Who are the ones featured in magazines and plastered on billboards? Kingdom values proclaim that the person who is truly blessed is the one who hears God’s Word and obeys. No matter what kind of body you have, you can listen and obey today!

Pray with Us

Moody Distance Learning makes a Moody education accessible to ministry leaders around the world. Thank God for this valuable training made available by John Knight, James Spencer, Lanna-Marie Enns, Feven Gebrehiwot, and Christian Martinsen.

Feeding Hungry Bodies

Mohandas Gandhi, a native of India, was educated in London and then practiced law in South Africa. He led India's struggle for independence from Great Britain in the 1930s and 40s. Concerned with the plight of the poor, Gandhi said, "There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread."

Though Gandhi was not a Christian believer, he gets at an important truth about God: throughout the ages, the God of Israel and the Father of Jesus, has made His presence known to hungry people through His faithful provision. In the wilderness, God provided manna, quail, and water. Now, on a mountainside, He would again be revealed as a provider of bread for hungry people.

The context for our passage today is the upcoming feast of the Passover. The Jews would soon be celebrating God's

gracious deliverance out of Egypt when the Hebrews fled before even their bread could rise. The annual feast reminded them of God's faithfulness in freeing them from slavery. Preparations for the Passover would likely have been on the minds of Jesus' audience.

Jesus replied,
"They do not
need to go away.
You give them
something to eat."

Matthew 14:16

The crowds were following Jesus because they had seen His works, including healing the sick. Jesus wanted to continue to provide for their bodies. Feeding their physical hunger was connected with revealing spiritual reality. Using the meager means of one boy's lunch,

Jesus miraculously provided for thousands. Amazed, and with their bellies full, the people realized that this was the One who had been sent by God, who at last would truly satisfy. Jesus had come not only to deliver bread and fish. Rather, to the hungry he made himself known as the bread of heaven, sent by God, to save a hungry world.

Apply the Word

Many of those Jesus fed misunderstood the impromptu picnic, and they saw Him as a mere meal ticket. Others, though, recognized the feeding as a sign of God's presence. This week, whether at the Lord's table or your dinner table, purpose to recognize God as a good Provider as He meets the needs of both your body and your spirit.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Distance Learning, let's ask the Father to give Christine Tinker, John Engelkemier, Richard Lin, Janet Randerson, and Kerwin Rodriguez strength and perseverance in their service at Moody.

God Can Be Known Through Disability

In her acclaimed memoir *A Good and Perfect Gift*, author Amy Julia Becker describes parenting her daughter, Penny, who was born with Down Syndrome. Some people look at Penny's distinctive features and see what is wrong with her. They compare her to an idea of "normal," and their ideas about people with differences and disabilities blind them from seeing the unique, clever, precious little girl Penny is. To Amy Julia and her husband Peter, though, their daughter is a gift from Jesus. In so many ways Penny—created in God's image—reflects her Creator and makes Him known to others.

In the first century, disability carried a stigma the way it still too often does today. Many people in the first century believed disability was caused by sin. So a person born with a disability—one who'd not yet had the opportunity to sin—generated a theological debate. Encountering a man born blind, folks

wondered whether his condition had been caused because he had sinned, or had he been afflicted because his parents had sinned?

Figuring Jesus just might have the answer, His disciples asked him that very thing. His answer was simple. To their surprise, he said, "Neither!" The man had been born blind, Jesus explained, so that God's work could be seen, or displayed, through him. Since birth, God's plan was for this man to encounter Jesus. In

the opening of the man's physical eyes, the spiritual eyes of many others would be opened to recognize Jesus as the Son of God.

The encounter exposes the difference between the way God sees and the way humans see. The ones whom we so easily identify as different—even sinful—are often those through whom God's goodness is revealed.

This happened so
that the works
of God might be
displayed in him.

John 9:3

Apply the Word

Even today it is tempting to believe that the healthy and strong, the prosperous and beautiful, are those who bear the image of a gracious God. Choosing to humble Himself as a man and deciding to work through weakness, however, was the strategy of a mighty God who cares for the weak. How does God want to be revealed in your weakness?

Pray with Us

Christine Gorz, Vice President of Corporate Communications, leads Moody's efforts in web communications, marketing, public relations, and customer service. Your prayers will be an encouragement to her as she leads and unifies her teams.

Jesus Served with His Body

The television series *Downton Abbey*, a British program that aired on public television stations in the United States, depicts people who live on a Yorkshire estate in the early twentieth century—both the nobility and the servants. In any scene, it's clear who is who: Lady Grantham and her daughters wear lovely gowns and jewels. The head butler is decked out in a crisp uniform. The kitchen maids rarely venture upstairs with the family, since they are wearing grubby work clothes. The status of each inhabitant of the house is obvious both by what they wear and what they are doing each moment.

Jesus and His disciples had gathered to enjoy the Passover meal together. Everyone present understood how it worked: guests would recline around the table and servants would . . . serve. Imagine the surprise of Jesus' friends

when—midmeal!—He got up from the table and began to take off His outermost garment. At first, they couldn't understand what was happening. When He wrapped a towel around His waist, they began to catch on. By the time He was filling a basin with water, everyone had figured out that He was preparing to wash feet. The act was surprising and even offensive. This was not a job for a host or a guest! Washing dirty, dusty feet was the work of a servant.

He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet.

John 13:5

In stooping to wash the feet of His disciples, Jesus both reminded them of the pattern of His life and foreshadowed the pattern of His death. Serving others is not an abstract principle. It is something that requires the activity of our bodies. Jesus' body is being humbled to the point of death, given for the world God loves.

Apply the Word

Jesus reminded His disciples that they are called to follow His example of service. As you reflect on your daily life, do you notice yourself being served by others, or do you recognize that you have stooped to serve? We are not called to uphold the status the world recognizes. We are free to serve others joyfully.

Pray with Us

Please join us in praying for Educational Technology Services (ETS): Rebekah Campbell, Timothy Canfield, Benjamin Dallman, and Timothy Gauger. Ask the Lord to give this team insight and patience as they serve students and faculty.

Jesus Sacrificed His Body

Henri Nouwen left a distinguished academic career that included posts at both Yale and Harvard in order to live at L'Arche Community near Toronto. L'Arche brings together the able-bodied and disabled to live in the same place, sharing their lives together. Nouwen describes his journey as an intellectual who learns critical lessons from those with disabilities in a book called *Road to Daybreak*. He explains, "When I look critically at my life I give some of my money, some of my time, some of my energy, and some of my thoughts to God and others, but enough money, time, energy, and thoughts always remain to maintain my own security. Thus I never really give God a chance to show me his boundless love."

Throughout his three-year earthly ministry, Jesus had been describing what it means to give one's self entirely to God and to others. He taught, "The last will

be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16). He invited, "Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39) Pulling no punches, Jesus stated, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Rather than offering us worldly security, Jesus said that those who want to pattern their lives after Jesus—a cross-shaped pattern—could be asked to offer all of their selves, including their bodies.

Though we purpose to walk with Jesus we keep clutching whatever we think will ensure our security. In failing to release our grasp, we also fail to experience the Father's boundless love. As we release our grip on worldly comforts, as we stretch out our hands to receive death's nail, we at last are positioned to receive the Father's boundless love.

They crucified him.

John 19:18

Apply the Word

More often the call to us is more prosaic. We might be asked to change diapers and spoon-feed young children, or perhaps our service includes cleaning yards and homes for people in our community who cannot do it themselves. Whatever form this service takes, Jesus asks us to sacrifice our time and energy and resources in His name and for His glory.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for ETS—Debbie Ellis, Daniel Klyop-Spurrier, Levy Prukpitikul, Robert Rutherford, and Josue Reyes—thank God for their service that enhances the education our students receive inside and outside of the classroom.

Jesus' Body Is Resurrected

The last book Ernest Becker published before his death was titled *The Denial of Death*. Several months later, it won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction. The book identifies the powerful impulse in all human beings to escape death's power. Whether it keeps us from visiting someone in the hospital or drives us to wear clothes and make-up to try to look younger, Becker claims that we're driven in powerful ways by an underlying fear of death.

Mary and the other disciples were still reeling from death's sting on the morning she stood beside an empty tomb weeping, eyes blurred by tears. When someone she thought to be the gardener spoke to her, she did not recognize him as Jesus. Gently, Jesus spoke her name, "Mary" (v. 16). In this moment of her greatest distress, Jesus compassionately called her by name.

He has risen from
the dead and is
going ahead of
you into Galilee.
There you will
see him.

Matthew 28:7

Over the next hours and days, others would encounter the resurrected Jesus. He showed Himself to the disciples. He offered His wounds for inspection. He even hosted a fish fry at the beach. This wasn't a magic trick, and Jesus' resurrected body wasn't an illusion. Rather, Jesus' entire person—body, mind, and spirit—has been resurrected to new life.

In light of His resurrection, His followers could now understand some of His final words to them prior to His crucifixion. He told them that they, too, would experience a bodily resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus' body is central act in human history and it alone can free human beings from our fear of death. Because Jesus' body was raised to indestructible life, we who trust in him know that our bodies will also be raised. We no longer have to feel bullied by death.

Apply the Word

Whether you're someone who dwells on death or whether you never give it a second thought, you might still be moved in deep ways to preserve your own life. In fact, it's a pretty natural way to live! Jesus has assured us, though, that we'll be resurrected with Him to new life. How might this confidence change your living today?

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for ETS, join us in asking the Lord to fill Michael Schulte, Frederick Schultz, Gregory Skorik, Andrew Thisse, and Christopher Webber with His joy and encourage them in their day-to-day tasks.

A Biblical Understanding of “Flesh”

A recent television series called *My Strange Addiction* features tortured folks with varied compulsions such as bathing in bleach, collecting dead things, or ingesting chalk. Each episode gives curious viewers a glimpse into the lives of those with unusual habits. Sadly, most of these addictions are not habits that give people a full, rich, healthy life.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul details the human conflict between living according to God’s law and bowing to the temptations of our sinful nature. Far from casting stones at the sins of others, Paul himself confesses, “So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25). The Greek word *sarx*, which Paul uses for sinful nature, is also the word translated elsewhere as “the flesh.” Paul is contrasting the life controlled by a mind set on the

flesh with one controlled by a mind set on the Spirit. Paul recognizes that a life driven by the carnal yearnings—whether bodily for pleasure, food, or sex; or emotionally for status, power, or control—contradicts God’s law.

He who raised
Christ from the
dead will also
give life to your
mortal bodies.

Romans 8:11

Pitting body against spirit was typical of ancient Greek thinking. Sadly, centuries later many Christians are still tempted to view the body itself as bad. But that’s not what Scripture is saying. In fact, as part of Paul’s argument he reminds his audience that God’s own Son was sent in the “likeness” of

sinful flesh in order to be a sin offering on our behalf (Rom. 8:3). It’s not the body that is bad, but rather it is the life that is controlled by the desires of the body that kills. To be “obligated” to the flesh, Paul says, is to die. To live a life driven by the Spirit is to live!

Apply the Word

God made human bodies good. Unfortunately, we are constantly tempted to relinquish control to desires of our flesh. Prayerfully identify those areas in your life that need to be submitted daily to the Spirit. Part of God’s promise to His children is that we no longer need to be controlled by our fleshly desires, whether bodily urges or emotional cravings.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, Chief Financial Officer, oversees all of Moody’s financial operations. He requests your prayers for Moody’s fiscal year-end on June 30. Join us in asking the Lord to provide for Moody’s financial needs according to His riches in glory.

A House for the Holy Spirit

Before they moved to a newly constructed house, the Johnson family met with the architect and the builder to design the perfect home for their family. The kitchen and dining area, where they spent so much of their time, was built to their specifications. Knowing they would be hosting company often, the living room was designed as a space to make others feel comfortable. Upstairs, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson chose a south-facing bedroom with beautiful lighting. The entire home was designed to accommodate the function of those who would live there.

Our bodies, claims Paul, are the dwellings where the Holy Spirit lives. The Lord does not dwell up in a heavenly cloud in the sky. Nor does He reside above our heads, as in a cartoon thought-bubble. No, God has made a home in our hearts. The omnipresent God has chosen to designate His people as His dwelling place. The Holy Spirit, whom we have received

from God, is residing in us, makes our physical bodies holy space.

Ancient gods such as Baal and Ishtar were worshiped in temples throughout the near east. To guarantee abundant crops or healthy livestock, worshipers would engage in fertility rites by uniting their bodies sexually with temple prostitutes. We can still identify ways in the twenty-first century that people are tempted to justify sexual sins.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?

1 Corinthians 6:15

Because our bodies have become the temple where a holy God dwells, it's no longer just in pagan temples where a holy God is dishonored by sexual immorality. What we do in these bodies matters, says Paul, because God lives in us. While we once behaved as if our bodies were our own; we do so no longer. Rather, the house in which the Holy Spirit lives is to be treated as the holy temple it is.

Apply the Word

Today, as you consider that the presence of God dwells in you, will you behave differently? When you are tempted to sin in thought, word, or deed, you can draw from the power of the Spirit—which is present in your own body—to refuse to use your body for sin and instead use it to bring glory to God.

Pray with Us

Residence Life ministers to over 1,600 men and women enrolled at Moody's Chicago campus. Will you ask the Father to help Neal Anderson, Karl Coppock, Jill Doyle, and Stephanie Frusher care for the needs of our students?

God Allows Bodily Suffering

When diagnosed with a brain disorder, the response of one Christian woman was what few would have imagined. Moved not by her prognosis but by a confidence in God's faithfulness, she mused, "The Lord is definitely letting me experience His strength as we begin this new journey." Anticipating surgery, she prayed, "Thank you, Jesus, for the opportunity to turn my whole life over to you and trust that you are walking—and sometimes carrying!—me through each day."

Her attitude was shared by the apostle Paul. In this letter to the church in Corinth, Paul addresses some of their attacks on his leadership. Though he defended both his credentials and his authority, Paul did confess what he called "a thorn in my flesh" (v. 7). This phrase is also used in Numbers 33:55, and it suggested then just what it does today: an irksome annoyance!

The particular nature of Paul's "thorn" has been debated over the centuries. Was it spiritual or physical? Sixteenth-century reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin believed Paul's thorn to be a temptation to unbelief. Others have assumed it to be a physical malady. Still others have guessed Paul was referring to having a hot temper.

My grace is
sufficient for you,
for my power
is made perfect
in weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9

This is all speculation, because Scripture does not tell us. Though we can't identify the particularities of Paul's thorn, the context of this passage does make one thing clear: it was a weakness. The Lord spoke into that thorny situation, saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9). In Paul's life, and in ours, the point or moment of our greatest weakness is when Christ's power is most clearly revealed.

Apply the Word

Is there a situation in your life today—physical, spiritual, social, or emotional—that God has chosen not to remove? Today, hold on to Paul's words, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (v. 10). When you are weak, Christ is strong! Through your adversity, Christ's power will be with you (v. 9).

Pray with Us

Again, join us in prayer for Residence Life: Rachel Monfette, Bruce Norquist, and Brenton Smith. Praise God for their care for our students and their commitment to helping train the next generation of Christian ministry leaders.

Desires of the Flesh Wage Soul-War

Two decades ago, Woody Allen caught the media's attention when he began dating the adopted daughter of his then-partner, Mia Farrow. The odd couple married five years later. When pressed by a reporter from *Time* magazine, Allen remarked, "The heart wants what it wants." Though offensive to some, the words were nonetheless true. Whether a child secretly drops her veggies into the garbage, a college student polishes off a bag of cookies, or an older man turns to liquor for comfort, the heart—the flesh!—wants what it wants.

In writing to believers who were scattered geographically, Peter reminds them of their truest identity. They are both a "royal priesthood" and a "holy nation," belonging to God. Specifically, he wants to encourage them to live good lives so that others may glorify

God. Knowing how "the heart wants what it wants," Peter urges his fellow Jesus-followers to "abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul" (v. 11). Peter recognizes in our human nature a pull between what the flesh—the sinful desires of our hearts, minds, and bodies—wants and the godly way. He knows that, as in any war, when one side gains ground, the other loses it!

To identify the sinful desires of the flesh as those that wage war against our souls is always

very different than saying the body itself is bad. Peter is warning that following sinful desires will lead to death—but these desires do not define our identity. We are God's chosen people! We are God's holy nation! When we live in the direction of our true calling, we are able to live lives that testify to God's love and power.

They may see
your good deeds
and glorify God.

1 Peter 2:12

Apply the Word

Self-esteem has been a topic of national conversation for years. Where should Christians find self-esteem? This passage tells us. If you struggle to know how and why your life is valuable, write 1 Peter 2:9 on a note card to carry throughout the day. This verse tells you who you are—God's special possession!—and your life purpose—declare His praises!

Pray with Us

Will you mention Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's President, while you pray today? May the Lord continue to guide his steps as he provides leadership for Moody's education, radio, and publishing ministries.

In Resurrection, Death Is Destroyed

Since 1940, the famous animated dueling duo Tom and Jerry have been battling it out on the small screen. Inevitably, their comic violence—a frying pan over the head or an unexpected electrocution—leads to Tom’s spirit rising out of his furry body and ascending to heaven. Heaven, of course, is located on a cloud. A guard, stationed at a stately gate, keeps out the riffraff. All the residents are donned in flowing white robes, angel wings, and a floating halo. Tom is given a cloud and harp to signify that his mortal life is over and he’s now in eternal bliss—at least until the next round of earthly battle with Jerry!

Images like these may lead us to imagine heaven being situated in the earth’s upper stratosphere, its residents suddenly being proficient harpists with a cloud of their own. What Scripture describes as the final consummation of God’s promise to dwell with His people,

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

Revelation 21:4

though, isn’t a disembodied, ephemeral existence, but rather a new heaven and a new earth (v. 1). Contrary to animated images floating upward toward the stars, the Holy City and God’s own presence actually descend down to a new physical earth, where residents experience the actual physical presence of God among them (vv. 2–3). In this tangible place, death and mourning and crying and pain have been eliminated. Here, the One who is the Beginning and the End cares for the ones He loves by offering water to those who thirst!

The reality that John describes isn’t one of cartoon ghost-like, vaporous bodies. Rather, he paints a beautiful picture of resurrected physical bodies that now dwell with God. On the promised new earth, these physical bodies have now been released from bondage to the powers of sin and death. Thanks be to God!

Apply the Word

For many, even those who trust in Christ, the unknown of the life after this one can be scary. More than one Christian has wondered if an eternity of harp-playing is appealing! The reality John describes is of a redeemed, embodied existence. Think about the hope we have in the promise of God to dwell in resurrected bodies in His very presence.

Pray with Us

Thank you for joining us this month as we studied what God’s Word says about our bodies. May we always remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19). Let’s ask the Lord to help us honor Him with our bodies.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

Thank you for the suggestions in the “Apply the Word” section. I have not thought of areas like fellowship with other believers or music in the context of sensing God’s nearness. I didn’t realize just how intimate those moments are to me until I read today’s devotional. Thank you for your faithfulness in helping us search the Scriptures, to grow in a deeper understanding of God and His wonderful Word.

—Donna (via e-mail)

[January’s] focus on fear in *Today in the Word* has been a great blessing to me. Turning seventy years old in December has been weighing heavy on my mind. It’s a reminder of how short life is. Have I done my best with the years I’ve had and what’s in store for my remaining days? I really like the statement on page five that says, “Faith does not replace fear; it puts fear in its proper place.”

—Gloria (via e-mail)

I grew up in Chicago and have lived in Florida for 20 years now, and there has been time when I was younger that I forgot to read my Bible, but every time I would come back to reading *Today in the Word*. You have helped me stay close to our God, have fellowship with Him, and learn to be like Him. Thank you!

—Carmen, FL

Just a brief note to tell you what a wonderful blessing your ministry through To-

day in the Word is to me, and most likely, countless others. In this increasingly dark, foreboding world you are indeed the salt and the light God has called you to be. Thank you for your faithfulness.

—Diane (via e-mail)

Just a note to thank the *Today in the Word* staff for your efforts in producing this devotional. I have been using it for 25 years. I am now legally blind and cannot study the Scriptures as I used to. I listen to the day’s portion on tape, and then with a magnifier manage to read the comments in the devotional. I appreciate so much the section “Apply the Word.”

—Helen, FL

Keep up the good work. I know that *Today in the Word* has helped me stay focused and grounded in Jesus these last 4+ years of my incarceration.

—William, IL

I wanted to let you know that [January’s] study of fear is exactly what I needed! I am thankful for this devotional and how God has used it so many times in my life. Please know that I pray for you all, in addition to following the suggested prayers [in the “Pray with Us” section]. Take care and know that your labor is not in vain!

—Diana, IN



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