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Christian Perspective of Health and Fitness



There is a great concern for health and fitness in Singapore and other countries as many scramble to the gym or spa resort or, slimming centres for weight loss programmes, jogging and Pilates classes to keep themselves trim and fit and to fight obesity. With an ageing population,

It is not wrong for one to want to be healthy and fit in our evening years. 1Cor 10:31, *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* The New and Old Testament has "health" messages to God's covenant people. The New Testament speaks of our body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and what is important within as well (Mark 7:18-23). We need clear minds and strong bodies to better serve God. Let us consider what the Bible has to say about health and the Christian walk!

The Case for a Biblical Balance

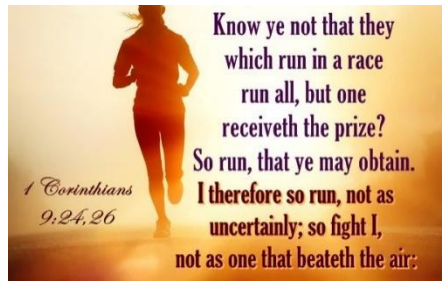
There is a need for proper biblical balance to all things. Some people focus entirely on their studies or work, to the neglect of their physical bodies. Others focus so much attention on the brawn, the form and shape of their physical bodies that they neglect God and spiritual growth, the word, prayer, Sabbath worship and maturity. Neither of these indicate a biblical balance. 1 Tim 4:8 informs us, that physical training is of some value, but godliness has eternal value for all things, for both the present life and the life to come. Notice that the verse does not negate the need for exercise. Rather, it says that physical exercise is also valuable, but it prioritizes exercise correctly by saying that spiritual exercise in godliness is of greater value.

We are soberly reminded of 1Cor 6:19, 20 that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us, and we are not our own. We were bought with a price; therefore, we are to glorify God in our bodies which are God's. We are to be good stewards too of our own bodies and not abuse it nor overly adorn it with seductive or unnecessary accessories as 1 Pet 3:3-4 advises all ladies, *"Whose adorning let it not be that of*

outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

It is true that we need to be careful of what we eat, or drink. It is important for it affects our physical wellbeing. Eating healthily with a balanced diet of meat, fruits and vegetables for the necessary nutrients for the body is important. Consider the balanced diet in Ezel 4:9-10 which says, *"Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it."*

The apostle Paul also mentions the metaphor of an athletic race and physical training in illustrating spiritual truth in 1Cor 9:24-27. He equates the Christian life to a race we run to "get the prize." But the prize we seek is an eternal crown that will not tarnish or fade. In 2Tim 2:5, Paul says, *"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."* Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. Paul uses an athletic analogy again in 2Tim 4:7, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."* While the focus of these Scriptures is not physical exercise, the fact that Paul uses athletic terminology to teach us spiritual truths indicates that Paul viewed physical exercise, and even edifying competition, in a positive light. We are both physical and spiritual beings. While the spiritual aspect of our being is, biblically speaking, more important, we are to neglect neither the spiritual or physical aspects of our health. Therefore, there is a duty for us to take care of our physical bodies with good regular cardiovascular exercise as well.




On other hand, there are some who are overly obsessed with their own fitness and health (i.e. 7 days a week in the gym to the neglect of worship, family and work) to the detriment of their spiritual lives. **It can also be a selfish dream to show off oneself to others with a beautiful body and an escapist journey to run away from the reality of life and live in a utopian state of perfect health and fitness to the glorification of the flesh. This is dangerous and we need to be careful here.**

Phil 4:5 says, *"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."* More importantly than just physical fitness, let us cultivate the good character of the Spirit filled Christian as in Gal 5:22-23 which says, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* Peter in 2Pet 1:5-10 gives us a proper list of attributes to develop as well, *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither*

be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

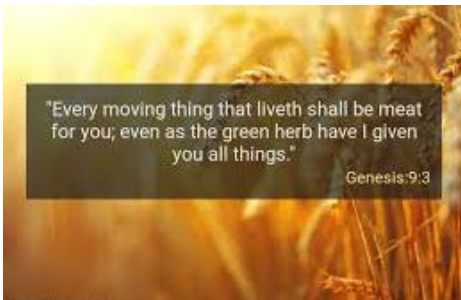
There is nothing wrong with a Christian exercising regularly to keep fit with good exercise but do not be obsessed with it or do it to the neglect of God and His Word, family church and work (i.e. going to the gym for workout on Sunday morning instead of worshipping God on the Sabbath). In fact, the Bible is clear that we are to take good care of our bodies (1 Cor 6:19-20). At the same time, the Bible warns against vanity (1Sam 16:7; Prov 31:30; 1Pet 3:3-4). Our goal in exercise should not be to improve the quality of our bodies so that other people will notice and admire us our external beauty, brawn or our sexuality. Rather, the goal of exercising should be to improve our physical health so we will possess more strength and physical energy that we can devote to spiritual goals to honour and serve the Lord with a healthy physical constitution.

"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
1 Samuel 16:7



Paul in 1Cor 9:27 adds this good advice for us all in spiritual and physical discipline, *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* There is a proper place of physical and spiritual discipline as well in the Christian life that we do not fall into sin.

Vegetarianism and the Christian



There is a strange emphasis in some quarters today in advocating the eating of only vegetables and/or fruits and avoiding all kinds of meat as a kind of a mandatory Christian diet. Theologically there is no basis for vegetarianism for 2 reasons (although it is not wrong when individually, some may avoid certain food for personal preference or health reasons as advised by the doctor ie if you are diabetic or high in cholesterol):

Firstly, in Gen 9:3-4 (this supersedes Gen 1:29) it says, *"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat."* Noah and his family were to eat all kind of herbs and living thing except blood which is forbidden as life is in the blood and it is still binding today (see Act 15:29).

This was reinforced on the New Testament in Act 10:11-15 where Peter was corrected by the Lord to eat all kinds of living creatures which were previously considered unclean ceremonially as a spiritual lesson on separation and purity to the nation of Israel.

Secondly, our Lord Jesus Christ is not a vegetarian for he kept the Passover every year and the Passover meal include eating lamb and Jesus ate fish with the disciples along the sea of Galilee (John 21:9-13). We are better of counting our blessing from the Lord than our calories daily; although those who have a medical condition or who are grossly overweight do need to watch their diet and discipline themselves. Above all, Rom 14; 17- 19 says it well, *"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."*

Mental Health and Fitness

There has been some concern by the authorities here on mental health recently (see The Straits Times, NS men and Mental health, 20 March 2025) as more and more **Singaporeans are affected by mental disorders like depression, anxiety, stress related ailments, phobias and obsessive compulsive behaviours and some cases can even be suicidal.** These affected people can be ordinary people like teachers, home makers and office workers who are stressed by the throes of

life and hence these mental ailments develop. What does the Word of God have to say on this subject if any? Firstly, Paul in

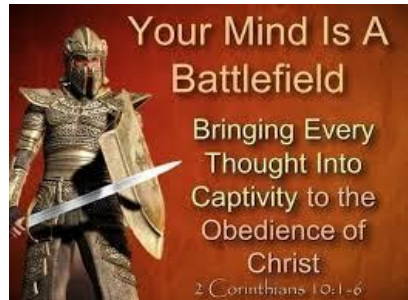
2Tim 1:7 clearly says, *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* The redeemed man has a sanctified and hence sound mind given by the Lord as what Paul says in Rom 12:1-2, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

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The renewal of our mind through meditation of the Word and frequent prayer with God gives us a healthy mental life. It affects the way we think and gives us the correct mental perspective of life that guides us with peace, comfort and wisdom in the Lord which is not tainted with the fears and doubts of this fallen world. 2Cor 10:5 says there is a part that we must do in promoting good mental health and fitness, *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*

In the gospel, there was an incident where a demon possessed man was healed by the Lord. Consider how he was described later in Mark 5:15 which says, *"And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid"* (i.e. he was not in his right minded before this).



This incident reminds us that some mental illness or bad thinking habits can be induced of the devil to bring us under bondage and slavery. We need to be careful not to be seduced by the wiles of the evil one and put on the full armour of God all the time. (Eph 6:10-18) The mind is still the great spiritual battlefield today that we need to watch over carefully by the knowledge of God's word and prayer.

Phil 4:8 gives us clearly some guidelines for a healthy thought life namely, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*"

Medicine and Prayer and Healing

A quick word about medication, intercession and healing for good health and strength. There are proponents in the church that teach that there is healing in the Lord's Supper (ie the elements are therapeutic instead of remembering the death of Christ) and others who are for man centred faith healing services by some apparently endowed with supernatural powers. Outlandish teachings will abound in the last days as we were warned in Matt 24:1-24. We need to follow the biblical injunctions of James 5:13-18 and let the church leaders pray for one another in our infirmities with the use of olive oil which was therapeutic in nature (in the absence of or lack of medical professionals). In 1Tim 5:23 we note that Timothy was sick, and Paul told him to take some medicinal wine for his stomach infirmities. **Paul did not perform supernatural healing on him. Neither did he try to heal Trophimus at Miletus, when the latter was sick (2 Tim 4:20). We believe in both prayer and medication which is the purpose of God for healing us in our infirmities according to His will and timing.**



Biblical Counsel on Eating Disorders

With the bad example of some worldly models in the fashion industry, there is a concern that some young ladies are so obsessed with their bodies that they would starve themselves in order to lose weight to look slim and "good". **This is a serious misunderstanding of God's will for our lives, and we need to address the problem of anorexia and bulimia which are mental or obsessive compulsive disorders when someone reject much needed food and nourishment favour of a better-looking body.** Some of them may have a history of abuse or have experienced teasing by friends on their size and shape, others may want to have a dream body after seeking to imitate some super stars or fashion supermodels who are not be worthy of our emulation at all.

In her book "*Thin Enough: My Spiritual Journey through the Living Death of an eating disorder*", Sheryle Cruse, the author says the following,

Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The thief Jesus is referring to is Satan. He is bent on destroying your life. Eating disorders are tools used by him to stop the wonderfully perfect plan God has for your life. They are tools he pulls out of his bag of destructive instruments, to tempt us, hook us and reel us in to a life of bondage. By delving or toying with the practice of eating disorders we authorize the most deceptive and diabolical creature complete and total control of our lives. We are granting him access to the control center of our minds which is dangerous.

We must not willingly hand over the reigns of our heart, mind body and souls to the wiles of the evil one. Jas 4:7- 8 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."

An eating disorder appeals to our self-reliance or independence to fix things that we do not like in our lives rather than relying on God. Our total dependence upon its destructive dictates has serious consequences. **Do not give in to the temptation to lose control of our wrong desires by the counterfeit fulfilment of the eating disorder promises. Some misguided young people conveniently substituted the eating disorder in the place of truthfully facing and dealing with problems in the strength of the Lord and one can be stifled in our growth emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually.**

Someone once said that eating disorders can be defined as "self-injurious, self-serving self-indulgent, self-taught and learned behaviours. To define it in a truthful way helps us to make the right choice and willingly and adequately arm ourselves with the weapons, in God's Word, that will help us to win the battle over this addictive and destructive behavioural habit.



"Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"

- 1 Timothy 6:17 -

"Know you not that *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit*, which is **in you**, which you have of God, and that *you are not your own*?"

Therefore **glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.**"

(1 Cor 6:19-20)

A proper biblical understanding gives us hope and a right response.

We can change bad eating behaviour by the renewal of our thought-life by the Word of God and re-training our eating habits by then enablement on the Holy Spirit. The biblical concept that will serve as our weapon against this behaviour already provided in Eph 4, Col 3:5-12 and Gal 5:16-23 in the put off s' and 'put-ons' which we need to do daily and faithfully by God's help.

God's practical way of fighting against destructive behaviours is a two-step process. He does not instruct us to simply stop doing what we are doing but gives also explicit instructions of what we should do, positively instead. We put-off the destructive and injurious behaviour and put-on i.e. practice the edifying habits that lead to life and health in Christ.

Eating disorders are at variance with the teachings of Holy Scripture. They principally reject a Creator who's love for His elect transcends physical traits (1 Sam 16:7; 1 Pet 3:3-4). Eating disorders are in disobedience to God's command to take care of oneself, and to be holy for the Lord. A life of holiness in the fear of God (1 Pet 1:16), is more important than beautifying our bodies; for we note that our bodies are not our own. We are to be faithful stewards of all He gives us and therefore we need to be good stewards of our bodies as well (1 Cor 3:17). This has to do with self-control or temperance that we deny both gluttony and starvation. It is with transformed and sanctified minds that we expose and discern the superficiality of our fallen worldly culture's demands and reject the selfish interests and destructive eating disorders that would undermine our testimonies, our physical bodies and ultimately, our health.

Conclusion

There is a proper place for a healthy mind and fit and trim body in the Christian testimony for the Lord through regular exercise and moderate and disciplined diet. But we need also to beware of defective notions (ie immediate weight loss programmes or vegetarianism) and worldly influences that would lead us into excessive addictions and eating disorders in our lives. **We need biblical principles to guide and lead us in this important matter. Let us be cognizant of the potential danger of obsession with physical health and fitness to the neglect of our spiritual walk with Lord.**

More importantly, Jesus says that we are to seek Him first and the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt 6:33) and all these things will be added unto us Col 3:1-2 says, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."*



Jack Sin

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Approaching God with the Right Disposition

LORD'S DAY PROGRAMME FOR APRIL TO JUNE 2025

APRIL

- 6 Approaching God with Reverence and Fear (Heb 12:20-28)
- 13* Approaching God as Students of His Word (Luk 24:24-33)
- 18* GOOD FRIDAY
The Darkest Day for the Son of God (Luk 23:37-56)
- 20 RESURRECTION SUNDAY
The Power of the Risen Christ (1 Pet 1:1-13)
- 27 Approaching God with Fervency in Spirit (Rom 12:1-12)

MAY

- 4 Approaching God with Humble Penitence (Act 20:1-21)
- 11* Approaching God with Praise (Psa 103:1-15)
- 18 Approaching God with Faith (Heb 11:1-6)
- 25 Approaching God with a Burden for His Kingdom (1 Cor 9:1-16)

JUNE

- 1 Approaching God as Faithful Stewards (1 Cor 4:1-10)
- 8* Approaching God with Holiness (Isa 6:1-8)
- 15 Approaching God with Maturity (Heb 5:12-14)
- 22 Approaching God with Patience (Psa 27:1-14)
- 29 Approaching God as Pilgrims (1 Pet 2:1-12)

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SOVEREIGNHOPE
bible presbyterian church

**Good Friday
Worship Service
18 April 2025, 8pm**

**The Darkest
Day for the
Son of God.**

(Luke 23:37-56)
Rev Jack Sin

Address:
Orion@PayaLebar.org
Contact: Dn Yue Kay



SOVEREIGNHOPE
bible presbyterian church

**Resurrection Sunday
Worship Service
20 April 2025, 10am**

*The Power of the
Risen Christ*

(1 Peter 1:1-13)
Rev Jack Sin

Address: 160 Paya Lebar Road,
Orion@PayaLebar.org, #04-06, S409022
Contact: Dn Yue Kay (hp: 97450311)

**Come & Join Us!
Outreach at All Saints Home (Tampines)
Sat 19 April, 3pm.**



Registration IS Required. Contact Dn Yue Kay by Sun 13 Apr 2025.



Brethren, let us come and pray together on every Wed night. 🙏

Preacher Myitta's Children Outreach, Yangon, Myanmar



I have received your love gift and bought a sack of rice and cooking oil for my family. Thank you, Pastor, for your love gift.

Pn Myitta

Memory Verse

Heb 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund
2. Pastor brings us God's Word this morning on "***Approaching God with Reverence and Fear (Heb 12:18-29)***", commencing a new quarterly series on "***Approaching God with the Right Disposition***".
3. Next Sunday, Pastor will preach on "***Approaching God as Students of His Word (Luk 24:24-33)***".
4. Sunday School classes after the worship service are:
 - Walking Through the Old Testament (Pastor)
 - Studies in Job (Dr Kwong Leen)
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on New Testament Foundations and the Psalms. [**Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode: 218178**].
6. **Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday Worship Services** will be held on **Fri 18 Apr 8pm** and **Sun 20 Apr 10am** respectively. See details on page 9. Do invite your friends and family to these special services to hear the Gospel of Christ and the Word of God.
7. Outreach at **All Saints Home (Tampines)** will be held on **Sat 19 Apr at 3pm**. Registration is compulsory. **Submit your details to Dn Yue Kay by 13 Apr**.
8. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. [**Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode: 625551**].
9. Pray for:
 - **2025 Annual Church Camp**, Jun 10-13 at Forest City Marina Hotel, Johor, Malaysia on the theme "*Wise or Foolish Living in a Smartphone Era*" by Rev Tan Eng Boo.
 - **Medical: Mrs Philip Heng** [brain aneurysm post op], **Poh Suan** [fractured right ankle], **John W's sister Angeline** [lung Cancer], **John W's daughter** [dialysis treatment].
 - **Myanmar Earthquake Victims & Relief Ministry Teams**.
10. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB Account 392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**Kindly indicate "**Church Building Fund**" if you would like to designate towards this cause.