



Soul Care

A BIBLE STUDY WITH

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CULTIVATE REVIVAL BIBLE STUDY SERIES

A Bible study series.
Designed to cultivate revival
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WEEK 1

THE IMAGE OF GOD



Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health,
just as your soul prospers.

3 JOHN 1:2

As I reflect on the words of the Apostle John to the Church, I can't help but notice the fullness of his desire that the reader should be blessed. That our spiritual man should be healthy, that our physical health should be in order, and that our soul should prosper. (Keeping in mind that our soul is NOT our spirit).

This is what the Father wants for us. That we may be healthy and good stewards in every aspect of our nature which is the imago Dei or, the "image of God". The image of God is the fullness of the Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit move seamlessly and harmoniously throughout creation and exist in perfect unity to fulfill the will of the Father. There is no discord in the triune Godhead and, as we have been made in that image, it is God's will that there be no discord in us as we are in Him.

Like God, our nature is made up of 3 individual parts: Body, Soul, and Spirit. A lively discussion might result from this question: "If Lebron James and Michael Jordan were in a head-on collision and the only way to save either was to put Jordan's brain into Lebron's body... Who would wake up?" (Break to argue) Before you say Jordan would wake up you must consider that our brains are just physical clumps of gray matter with images stored and have no more mystical or metaphysical properties than any other flesh and blood organ. As a matter of fact, by the time you are 50 your entire brain

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will have replaced itself and literally nothing physiologically of “baby you” will remain.

Weird, I know. So, what makes us who we are? It’s a combination of soul, body, and spirit. We are completely unique, and the bible says in Psalm 139:14-16 “I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.”

Yes, we live in a state of body, soul, and spirit and very few people steward all 3 aspects well. Having been a personal trainer and worked with every physical specimen from Olympic caliber runners to IFBB body builders, I’ve seen many people who have stewarded their bodies well. But truthfully, some of those people were the least healthy emotionally and spiritually I’ve ever seen. The toll that living your life as a performance and basing your value on physical appearance and excellence can easily create havoc in one’s soul and self-worth.

I’ve also seen spiritually minded people who live their lives in incredible discipline of prayer, fasting, scripture reading, holy living, and service to God and man; suffer from the deepest depression imaginable. I’ve seen many of those same people so completely neglect their physical health that they lived diminished lives of pain, discomfort, and hardship unnecessarily.

(I take a moment to include a caveat: I speak only to the elements of our physical, spiritual, and emotional health that ARE in our control. Not everything is in our control ranging from thyroid problems and sicknesses to chemical imbalances.)

It is no better to live life as an emotionally healthy person with no depth of character or spiritual discipline or in state of unnecessary physical discomfort and poor health. And the truth is that, in our closely interwoven nature, the poor state of one aspect impacts the others.

So, what is it that God wants for us? His good desire is that we function as He created us, in health and wholeness in every part of our lives. That we steward well all that is in our control as unto the Lord and walk with Him in fullness of joy and purpose. In the words of philosopher and theologian Dallas Willard “do you want to go to heaven? Go now. The Kingdom of heaven is at hand”. While of course we believe in a literal place called heaven where we will live in the presence of God forever, Willard is onto something!

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What makes heaven, heaven to you? If it's the gold, so be it. But if you, like me, consider it Heaven because of the presence of the Father and communion with Him, then the Kingdom is indeed at hand. Hell is much the same. Look past the flames and see the real nature of hell. It is eternal separation from the Father and His love and light. Willard also gave one of the greatest answers to the question of, “who will go to hell” that I've ever heard saying, “anyone who wants to”. It is God's plan and pleasure to redeem us through Christ, but the choice remains yours.

Over the next several weeks we will study the Word for what it is to live a life of complete health and devotion in all 3 areas of our created nature.

1. Our Physical Bodies
2. Our Soul/Emotions
3. Our Spirits/Spiritual Disciplines

Like the Apostle John, I too want God's very best for you. That you may prosper in ALL things, be physically healthy, and emotionally healthy.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

What would a “healthy me,” look like? _____

Am I prospering in all things? Am I physically and emotionally healthy? _____

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I thank you for this time together. Forgive me for the areas I failed You today in the stewardship of what You have given me. I thank you for health, for provision, for Christ who redeems us and the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live like You. Show me the areas in which You want to bless me and make me more like You. Give me the insight, will, and strength to live fully in the freedom You have given me. Amen.



WEEK 2

MAINTAINING THE TEMPLE



But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:27

But Daniel appealed to a steward who had been assigned by the head of the palace staff to be in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: “Try us out for ten days on a simple diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the young men who eat from the royal menu. Make your decision on the basis of what you see.” The steward agreed to do it and fed them vegetables and water for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked better and more robust than all the others who had been eating from the royal menu. So the steward continued to exempt them from the royal menu of food and drink and served them only vegetables.

DANIEL 1:11-16

1 Corinthians 6:19 informs us that our bodies are, “the temple for the Holy Spirit”! It is a practice of biblical stewardship to maintain our physical health for the work of God in and through us. Let’s be very intentional in understanding this though. This has nothing to do with physical attractiveness, 6 pack abs, or chiseled features. This has to do with a temple of the Holy Spirit that functions well, feels well, and enjoys longevity and the benefits of robust health. In our scripture reading we see Paul practicing physical and spiritual discipline in order to, “control the flesh,” and steward the gift of God in his life well. Paul treated his body like a runner because he had someplace to go. While our physical health is not more important than the spiritual or emotional it can be crucial to the success of either.

The story of Daniel and the other young men who refused the King’s menu of rich and indulgent foods is multi-layered. Yes, there is an element of ceremonial uncleanness to consider. But there are other lessons that we find applicable to our own lives in the New Testa-

Paul treated his body like a runner because he had someplace to go.

ment church. The story of Daniel is a story of discipline and stewardship. Daniel was a man of “excellent” stewardship.

He stewarded his spiritual/prayer life well: He was so faithful in his prayer and devotional life that his enemies knew right where to find him at the exact time every day. He was willing to be cast into the den of lions rather than forsake his spiritual disciplines! That’s commitment!

He stewarded his authority well: Daniel was so faithful as a man of character that he was promoted to lead the entire kingdom under the rule of the king himself! God increased his responsibilities when he proved faithful.

He stewarded divine revelation well: His continued faithfulness to God brought Daniel to another level of promotion. God trusted Daniel with the divine revelation of the dreams of others and, eventually, Daniel was given prophetic revelation that is part of our Bible today. I can’t think of a greater honor to be trusted with than that!

Steward what you have. Before the lion’s den, the interpretation of dreams, the rulership of a nation, or the writing of scripture what did Daniel have? Not very much as it turns out.

Daniel is actually a slave. Far from home and with zero control over his future, his life, or his situation. Daniel had only one thing in the power of his control. His health. It sounds crazy, but Daniel’s journey begins with controlling the one thing he could and that was his physical body. But that is really always the way of biblical stewardship. Christ teaches us that principle in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. The central concept is that God expects us to manage what IS in our control currently before He will expand that control into greater things.

Our body is only a part of what makes us human and valuable to God. We are not bodies with a spiritual experience, we are spirits with a physical experience. However, being caretakers of the physical body, we've been given is part of Christian living.

The health and vitality of our body is directly impactful to our soul and emotional health. The food we eat can influence the development, management and prevention of numerous mental health conditions including depression and dementia. Healthy exercise releases endorphins and can improve our energy and mood and impact a host of other areas.

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Do my eating habits help build a “healthy temple?” _____

How can I steward my physical body better? _____

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I thank you for my health. I present my body as a living sacrifice, Holy and acceptable to You. Forgive me for the times I disregard the proper stewardship of the Temple of the Holy Spirit which dwells in me. Help me to walk in perfect peace and closeness with You. May the disciplines of my life reflect the value You place on me as an image bearer of God. Thank you that You care nothing for the outward appearance of man but look only at the heart. In response to Your love may I steward all things well that You have entrusted to me. Amen.



WEEK 3

THE SOUL

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,
for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

An old Scottish proverb says, “The beginning of a ship is a plank, of a castle a stone, and the beginning of health is sleep”.

Following up last week’s focus on the health of our physical bodies, today our focus is on emotional/soul health. The soul is the seat of all emotion and the most primary 4 emotions we feel are anger, joy, sadness, and fear. We are capable of a wide spectrum of complex feelings but usually they are an outgrowth or mixture of these primary 4.

The first thing we need to clear the air of is this: “There are no bad feelings. Just bad management of feelings.” -Pastor Brandon Blue, LPC, NBCC. Feelings are not right or wrong. They just are. Ephesians 4:26 instructs us to “Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath”. We are to manage our feelings in a Christ-like way and as we experience positive and negative emotions. The reason we focus on this is simply that we are GOING to feel a lot of things in our lives no matter what. What we do with those emotions is going to be the story of our life.

“There are no bad feelings. Just bad management of feelings.”

Let’s look at one of the most amazing passages in the bible dealing with the subject of emotional and mental health. It’s the story of Elijah the Prophet in 1 Kings 18. In a very

politically, spiritually, and personally charged moment; Elijah finds himself squaring off on a mountain-top altar with the prophets of the demonic god, Baal.

The gauntlet has been thrown down and a winner take all stake goes to the G(god) who answers by fire. 1 Kings 18:36-39 “And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!”

And the crowd went crazy! They rose up against the prophets of Baal and it seemed like everything was perfect. A euphoric ending to a story of danger, spiritual outpouring, and sacrifice! Except it wasn't. Everything was the same and even worse. God was on the mountain, but Jezebel was still in the palace. And now there was a target on the back of the man of God like never before. What a letdown it must have felt like. Going from that exultant feeling of victory and joy to a crash of fear, anxiety, and suicidal depression in just a few days.

Have you ever felt that way? Just when it seems things are going right, the bottom caves in? You finally feel like you have a hold on fear and anxiety and negative thought patterns and then BOOM... someone or something (usually you) sabotages your peace? You are not alone. Over the next few verses, we find the man of God in such deep depression that his literal suicidal ideation brings him to ask God to “kill me. I'm a total failure”.

What do you think God's response is? A lecture? (God is good at those.) A stern rebuke for his lack of faith and godliness? A disqualification for his acting out in his wounded state?

No, none of the above. God said what He always has and always will in times like these. Come away with Me. Be with Me. I'm not angry that you are suffering. I am caring and compassionate and my thoughts toward you are good. (Jeremiah 29:11, Mark 6:31, Isaiah 41:10) Elijah is in absolute crisis mode from a mental health standpoint. It's not a strictly spiritual problem because Elijah has done everything perfectly on that front. He demonstrated faith, prophecy, obedience, ministry, faithfulness, and anointing that culminated in the fire of God falling on the mountaintop. I'll summarize the tender and loving care of God towards Elijah in chapter 19.

You are
not alone!

1. God sheltered and caused him to rest. (vs. 5):

Elijah sits down under the shade of a tree and falls asleep. Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is sleep. Dallas Willard, famed theologian, and Director of USC's School of Philosophy always began his Ph. D. students with a week-long "sleeping contest" for this reason. If Jesus needed a nap here and there how much more do you? I know..We're much busier and more important than the Son of God. But it's a thought.

2. God insisted that he eat and drink. (vs. 5-8):

It is so crucial to eat and drink properly when going through emotional and mental turmoil. A friend and fellow Pastor said he "eats his feelings". I personally choke on mine. I find it nearly impossible to eat anything when my heart and soul are overwhelmed. But God knows that a part of what will determine what Elijah does, is what he feels. And a part of what will determine what Elijah feels emotionally is physical. Being nourished and well rested is a huge and undervalued part of navigating our lives (Especially in crisis).

3. God talked with Elijah. (vs. 12):

Elijah sees all of the incredible power and majesty of God's creation on display in a tornado, an earthquake, and even a fire! But God isn't in any of those things. Elijah hears and sees God revealed in a still, small voice. God tells Him that he's not alone (vs 18). I think this is a huge part of mental health. Knowing that you are not isolated and not alone. You are loved by God and more people than you know. You matter. He reminds Elijah that he has a purpose and anointing. God instructs him to go and anoint and, in doing so, He reminds him that he still has a purpose and plan for his life.

These are crucial things that God wants to speak to us in moments of pain and crisis. Rest. Eat. Commune with the Father. You are valued and not alone.

**REST. EAT. COMMUNE WITH THE FATHER.
YOU ARE VALUED AND NOT ALONE.**

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

How well do I prioritize rest in my daily routine? _____

Do I allow my feelings /emotions to make my decisions? _____

PRAYER:

Loving Heavenly Father, I know that You are here with me in my good times and bad times. You don't take relational "breaks" based on performance. Teach me to lean on You and to seek You rather than myself. I accept the invitation of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Teach me the unforced rhythms of grace. Amen.

WEEK 4

SPIRITUAL HEALTH



‘And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

MARK 12:30-31

Christian spiritual formation or “spiritual health” encompasses the well-being and growth of our relationship with God. It involves aligning our thoughts, actions, and character with the teachings of Jesus. By studying the life of Christ, we find profound examples that illuminate the path to spiritual health.

Jesus’ life exemplifies unwavering faith and trust in God. From His humble birth to His sacrificial death, Jesus consistently demonstrated reliance on His heavenly Father. His complete surrender to God’s will teaches us the importance of submitting ourselves to God’s plan. To nurture our spiritual health, we must cultivate a deep trust in God’s faithfulness and sovereignty, even in times of uncertainty.

Jesus consistently
demonstrated
reliance on His
heavenly Father.

Christ’s ministry was characterized by love and compassion. He demonstrated kindness and mercy toward all, regardless of their background or social status. His interactions with the marginalized, such as the Samaritan woman and the lepers, remind us of the transformative power of genuine love. As followers of Christ, nurturing spiritual health requires us to embrace the commandment to love one another as ourselves. By extending compassion, forgiveness, and grace to others, we not only emulate Jesus’ example but also deepen our connection with God. While I’m not advocating “self-love” in the modern sense, there is an elephant in the room.

I'll just say it: People who hate themselves will always find it difficult to love God and impossible to love others. The usual way of interpreting Mark 12:31, "love your neighbor as yourself," rightly assumes that, loving ourselves, we would then love our neighbor.

But what if we hate ourselves? See the quandary? To make it more difficult, the Bible says in 1 John 4:20, "anyone who says they love God but hates their brother or sister is a liar". So, this is the result: The greatest commandment is to love God. (Mark 12:30) In order to love God, we have to love our neighbor. (1 John 4:20) We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mark 12:31)

I'm not talking about pridefully loving ourselves. I'm talking about humbly accepting the love and worth that God has placed on us. We are image bearers of the majesty of God

People who hate themselves will find it impossible to love others.

and bought with a great price. We have value. People who hate themselves will find it impossible to love others. But people who walk in the love and worth that the Father has bestowed on them will find it impossible not to. And as an outgrowth of that love, we can then fulfill that greatest of commandments "to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength".

Throughout His life, Jesus frequently sought solitude to pray and commune with God. He valued the power of intimate conversations with the Father, often retreating to quiet places to seek guidance, strength, and renewal. Similarly, for our spiritual health, we must prioritize prayer as a means of connecting with God. By setting aside dedicated time for prayer, we open ourselves to His presence, invite His wisdom into our lives, and experience spiritual growth. It's important to remember this distinction: Solitude is being alone with **God**. Isolation is being alone with **you**. Meaningful and quality time alone with God is a must for spiritual health.

I find that "habit stacking" is a useful tool when trying to develop good spiritual health

practices. Habit stacking involves taking a daily task that you will ALWAYS do (brushing your teeth, feeding the dog, locking the doors before bed etc.) and “stacking” a spiritual discipline along with it. 1. Every time I turn on the engine, I pause to thank God in prayer. 2. As soon as I get into bed I reflect on His goodness. 3. When I fold clothes, I listen to worship music and purposefully engage in loving the Father. It can look a million different ways, but we must engage in regular spiritual disciplines in order to walk in spiritual health.

Jesus demonstrated remarkable humility and servant-hood. He washed the disciples’ feet, urging them to follow His example of selfless service. Cultivating humility is vital for our spiritual health, as it enables us to recognize our dependence on God and embrace our role as servants to others. By humbling ourselves and seeking opportunities to serve, we reflect the nature of Christ and allow His transformative power to work through us. It is completely inaccurate to think of Jesus as timid, weak, or passive as a person. Meekness is not weakness! The Greek word used to describe Jesus as “meek” in Matthew 11:29 is “praus,” and comes from a root word describing the mighty horses in a military cavalry charge. These powerful creatures, capable of incredible feats of strength and violence were completely under control. A great way to think of this word is, “immense power under control”. Walking in spiritual health is walking under the control of the character of Jesus Christ and we do this through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christian spiritual health is an ongoing journey that requires intentional efforts to align our lives with the teachings of Jesus. By observing the life and character of Jesus, we discover invaluable lessons that guide us toward spiritual growth. Faith and trust in God, love and compassion, prayer and communion with God, and humility and servant-hood are foundational aspects of Christian spiritual health. As believers, we are called to emulate the life of Christ, drawing inspiration from His example, and allowing His teachings to shape and transform us on our path to spiritual wholeness.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Do I truly love others? Why or why not? _____

In what area of my life can I practice “meekness”? _____

PRAYER:

Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for desiring and initiating our relationship. Lord, I receive Your love and correction in whatever areas remain in me that are not submitted to You. I accept Your unwarranted and undeserved love for me. Now help me by the power of the Spirit to extend that love to others so that I may love You as You have commanded. Help me to walk, love, serve, forgive, and be as You intend. In my flesh I do not always want to be like You, but I want to want to be like You. Grow that in me into holiness and conform me to the image of Your Son Jesus. Amen



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