

We are stewards of priceless gifts. And doubly so in Christ: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body”
(1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
Romans 12:1

I want to remind you here as we begin that you are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Made. Built. Designed. Your human body, your human brain, your human eyes bear the unmistakable marks of the universe’s master builder, master craftsman, master designer, who is God himself. You are not the product of impersonal forces, such as time and chance and natural selection. You are designed. Spectacularly built. Fearfully and wonderfully made.

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The apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20 that God’s “invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world.” And not only is the glory of our Creator revealed in the creation around us. Not only are the heavens declaring the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), and the seas, the mountains, the plains, and all the animal kingdom. But we ourselves; we are creatures. Right under our noses — in fact, our very eyes and ears and noses — are even far more striking evidences of the brilliance and skill and wisdom of our designer and maker who is God himself.

Born to Run?

Perhaps some of you may be familiar with the 2009 bestselling book *Born to Run* in which the author marvels at the human anatomy and physiology and our ability for endurance running. But humans are not just born to run. While animals tend to excel at one or two main abilities, God built humans for countless abilities, with capacities to adapt and specialize and excel in many ways.

The research on this shows no favoritism, no sweet spot according to any one activity, no real specialization, and this result is counter to what’s found with any other species. For other species, one can make a categorical statement like “born to gallop,” but for humans, no. Born to run? Yes indeed, but also born for doing other activities as well.

The human body is unique among the bodies of our close relatives, our fellow mammals, in not having a sweet spot, in having muscles and a supporting skeletal system designed for a whole variety of movements.

The hallmark of the human condition is our ability to tolerate and thrive in a wide variety of conditions.

In what other species do you see a variety that stretches from linebackers to ballerinas? Normal people like us tend to think of professional athletes and dancers as flukes of nature, that they were born with something we were not. In the moment we sit in front of the television, or in a stadium or

theater seat, it sure seems like we could never be doing what they're doing. I could never move my body like that. I never could have been that strong or fast.

But perhaps we should pause for just a minute and think about how different our lives have been for the last twenty years. Or thirty years. We were born far more alike than we tend to think. These masters of movement that capture our attention were not born with the ability to do gymnastics, or jump into the air and land on ice skates, or hit a hundred-mile-an-hour fastball.

Rather, the human body, in its divine design, is capable of developing amazing abilities of all sorts over time. We tend to overestimate what our bodies can do in the short run, and underestimate what they can do in the long run.

To Move Is To Live

The very first chapter of the Bible notes how basic movement is to life: living creatures move (Genesis 1:21, 28; 7:21; 8:19; Leviticus 11:46; Ecclesiastes 4:15), and moving creatures live (Genesis 9:3). So also in the Psalms, **movement and life go together:**

Psalms 50:11: God says, "I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine."

Psalms 69:34: David says of God, "Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them."

For David, it was a burden, not a blessing, that he "could not move about freely" as he hid from Saul (1 Chronicles 12:1). And across Israel's history, it was a mark of the emptiness and vanity of idols that they "will not move" (Isaiah 40:20; 41:7; 46:7; Jeremiah 10:4).

the apostle Paul said "In him we live and move and have our being. — and we should take live and move here as nearly synonymous rather than as two distinct actions. There is a telling third verb in the sequence: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). For humans, in typical circumstances, to live and have our being is to move.

Not that we only move. God also made us to rest. And to sit — it is no flaw, defect, or mark of laziness, but a glory, that the risen Christ completed his work and sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3). God made humans to thrive in variety, in seasons, in rhythms. We were not made only to move — but the danger today, for the vast majority of us, is the other extreme: that we are not moving enough, not as much as God designed us to move, for his glory, for our own joy, and for the good of others.

Why Movement Matters

Consider, then, three reasons why bodily movement is so important for Christians who have been spared the tragedy of disability, and find themselves able to move and live less sedentary lives than our surrounding society. I'm eager for you to hear these as opportunities afforded you by the wonder and marvel of the human body you have, rather than as obligations.

1. Move to reflect God's glory.

First, God made us to move for his glory. He created us "in his own image" (Genesis 1:27). We were made to reflect and display him, to be monuments to God's strength and beauty, but not stationary statues. Instead, we are living, breathing, speaking, working, moving images of God himself, representing him, going out into his created world to display his glory here and there, and there, and there. He thought it best that his imagers not be fixed to the ground, but have feet and legs and arms and hands, to move around and fill the whole earth with his glory.

God has his spectacular ways of glorifying himself through disability. But in general, movement in some form becomes the typical occasion of imaging him in the world. To draw honor to him, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Next verse: “Do not be conformed to this [sedentary] world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2) — that you might present your body “holy and acceptable to God.”

Christ “bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” in our bodies (1 Peter 2:24). As the apostle Paul rehearses, “The body is . . . for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13); therefore, “glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20). Paul himself eagerly expected and hoped that “Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20).

Glorifying God in our bodies is not mainly about what we avoid and don’t do with them. It is first, and far more, about what we do with them — how we move, where we go with our feet and legs, what we do with our arms and hands to help others, and what we say with our mouths to accompany and give meaning to the movements and acts of our bodies.

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As one example of human movement, in a Bible that presumes it from beginning to end, consider the life of Christ, the very image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4), who lived perfectly to the glory of his Father (John 17:4, 6, 26). Even a cursory reading of the Gospels makes it plain that he did not live anything close to the sedentary life that entraps us today.

Even apart from the obvious — no cars, no trains, no planes, no screens, no phones, no clocks, along with no modern medicine or processed foods — Jesus walked everywhere he went. He moved around a lot, as did all able, working-class humans in the ancient world. We see the same with Paul in Acts and in his letters. When traveling, a day’s journey would have been 20–25 miles (essentially walking a marathon), and when not traveling, they would have easily walked 5 miles (10,000 steps) or more doing daily work as a builder or tentmaker, on their feet for large portions of the day.

And they didn’t just move their feet but hands and arms, lifting, cutting, pushing, holding. Jesus worked construction for decades as a common tradesman. And, though he was a man of sorrows (because of our sin) acquainted with grief, we get the impression again and again that he was deeply happy and emotionally stable — happy enough to show compassion, and control his sorrow and anger. At least such normal, daily movement meant his emotional health wasn’t encumbered by an overly sedentary lifestyle. Which leads to a second reason why movement is so important for Christians.

2. Move to jumpstart your joy.

“Eating alone will not keep a man well; he also must take exercise,” but he also treated depression with a long walk. And if that didn’t seem to help right away, he advised taking another. “Walking is the best medicine.”

God made our bodies to be healthier and happier when they move. Moving limbs increase our heartrate and circulate blood, moving hormones and nutrients through the body to where they need to be — especially the brain — for optimal physical, mental, and emotional health. “During exercise, [the hormones needed for mental health] push through the blood-brain barrier, a web of capillaries with tightly packed cells that screen out bulky intruders such as bacteria” (Ratey, Spark, 51). Without bodily movement, our brains don’t get all they need to stay balanced and happy.

Movement alone will not create spiritual joy, but many Christians, myself included, have found that it can help as a precious emotional boost. In the mysterious connection between body and spirit, food and sleep and exercise (or lack thereof) have the ability to buoy or drag down our spiritual affections.

This leads to a third and final reason why movement is so important to Christians.

3. Move to do others good.

Christians can appreciate the modern term fitness. To call an active, able, healthy human body fit implies that the body is not an end in itself. It's not for just looking at in photos or on stages, but for doing something, moving, accomplishing tasks in the world. The goal of fitness is not to look good in the mirror or on Instagram. True fitness means our bodily ability serves other purposes. The body is fit to do something. The question is: Fit for what?

In Christ, we have far better answers to that question than secular workout culture and its false gods. Twice Paul uses a phrase that could be our rallying cry for a genuinely Christian call to fitness: "ready for every good work" (same phrase in Titus 3:1 and 2 Timothy 2:21). In Christ, we want to cleanse our bodies "from what is dishonorable" (sin, including laziness) and "be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21).

We want to be ready. Ready to move and display God in his world. Ready with hands and arms, not too bulky and not too flabby, that can reach and lift and pull and push. Ready with feet and legs that feel life and energy in every step. Ready with minds and hearts and wills that would rather move than lounge, rather get up and go and have something to do than just sit there on a screen, rather move into the world and work to help people than calculate how we might move as little as humanly possible.

In Christ, in the service of love, we want to get (and keep) our bodies, in their various seasons of life, in the condition needed to serve God's callings on our lives to love others. We want to be the kind of people that want to do good for others, knowing that such good often requires exerting our bodies in ways that are uncomfortable, and even unthinkable, if we are lazy and unfit.

As we saw earlier, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:20, "Glorify God in your body." So, how does a body glorify God? One way to say it is you need the body required for Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Invisible joy in God overflows into visible acts of love for the benefit of others (good works), accompanied by words that testify to the worth and value of God in Christ.

"Let your light shine" is what images do. They make someone who is not visibly present to human eyes in a particular place to be visibly present in that place. What others see is our bodies, moving, doing "good works." And critical to God being glorified in our doing, in our bodies, is that our joy in him is made known in our faces and words and actions. When our good works are seen (and heard) to be an overflow of our joy in God, he is glorified.

Move the Needle!

What is your default posture on life? Has your mindset become overly passive and sedentary, or do you embrace regular activity and movement? Do you think of your human life as essentially stationary, unless moved by some great force into action? Or do you think of yourself as active, moving, working, often beckoned to stop or sit to address some particular task? Do you think of movement as an opportunity — to be happy, make others happy, and make God look good?

Here's what I'd ask you to consider, Might some change of your default mindset serve your spiritual joy, the glory of God, and the good of others? What if, over time, you sought to cultivate a new set of expectations for daily life, and reorient your subconscious default from being as passive as possible, to taking joy in the regular rhythms of sitting and moving, resting and regular, vigorous activity?

If you're in a passive and sedentary state right now, such a change may seem imponderable. Your energy levels feel low, and you may think that means you need to do less, not more. But God made these marvelous bodies not only to sit but to move, and for expending energy to produce more energy. Perhaps your energy is low because you have been moving so little. It may be that you need to first expend what little energy you have in some good work, and then rest later, and learn to increase your capacity over time. And with it, cultivate a new (and countercultural) mindset that movement, activity, work, exertion is not to be avoided like evil, but rather, in the power of the Spirit, it is God's call on us for overcoming evil.

My encouragement would be to begin where you are, with small steps over the long haul. Maybe it's just tracking your steps and setting a step goal for a while. Walk to get your heart rate up, and push the nutrients and hormones your brain needs across the blood-brain barrier. Remember how good it feels after you've moved and expended yourself.

Over time, as your legs and feet get stronger, and you build up a base, cultivate a more active mindset: I'm ready to use this body to help others — whether that means jumping at the opportunity to go up and down stairs, or take out the trash, or carry boxes, or wipe the counter, or pick up something off the floor. Embrace household chores, which serve others, with intentionality and purpose. Move with energy, and enjoy moving your body.

“Your capacity for joy in movement will grow over time — not just weeks but months, and years. Keep at it.”

And know that the joy of movement grows over time. “Exercise is an acquired pleasure,”

In a world of sin and tragedy like ours, it is a wonder to have able hands and feet and bodies. God made these bodies — the most remarkable material objects in all of creation. We are stewards of priceless gifts. And doubly so in Christ: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).