

## “Decluttering our Bodies”

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 3:16-17; Romans 12:1-2

Graphics: clutter, piles, heart, soul, mind, body

Big Truth: In order to be disciples in the ways that God calls us, we are commanded to love God with our all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Sometimes our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies get cluttered and it blocks our ability to see and hear God and to serve God in our areas of giftedness. When we spend time decluttering our lives, at the beginning of the new year, we open the way for us to love God and our neighbors more, as Jesus said.

Focus Phrase: Clearing out the clutter in my body allows me to be a strong dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

### 1. Introduction

#### A. Let's PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)

- B. Today, we've come to the final message of our sermon series that we've been calling **Decluttering Our Lives**.
- C. This whole series is based on Jesus words in Mark 12:28-31, which are better known as the Greatest Commandment. It's actually two commandments that Jesus bundled together to give us our mission and vision for the ways that we, as followers of Jesus, are to engage with God and the world.
- D. Let me read this for us again to ground us, this morning: “One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
- E. “...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ That’s what we’re focusing in on, SO THAT, we can do what Jesus said was the related commandment, and just as important, which is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- F. When we declutter our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our bodies (our strength), then we are becoming more available to God’s will and way in our lives...and that always entails glorifying God and witnessing to the world.
- G. We’ve decluttered our hearts, souls, and minds...and this week, we declutter our bodies so that we can love the Lord with all our strength.
- H. Now, this idea of a body or strength is fairly simple, right? If you remember in week 2, I quoted George MacDonald who said, “You ARE a soul. You HAVE a body.” It’s like a rented, temporal body tuxedo over your eternal soul.

- I. It's helpful to think about it that way because it gives us the right perspective on the relationship we have with God through our souls - eternal and God-created - and how we utilize the strength of our bodies to be vessels of our souls. It's the *physical* in connection with the *spiritual*.
- J. So, what's the big deal about our bodies? Does God care about our bodies? Should WE? And what happens when we have clutter in our bodies that zaps our strength?
- K. We'll explore what clutter we DO have in our bodies - which, if I had to give a shortlist is: nutritional clutter, sexual clutter, and recreational clutter - and then get some application about decluttering our bodies.
- L. One foundational piece that we'll read is that scripture tells us that our bodies are **temples of the Holy Spirit**. And because that's true (we believe the scriptures as our primary authority and source of theology) then what we DO with and in our bodies is of critical importance to a God who loves us and wants us to be healthy agents of the Kingdom of God.
- M. Write this down in your notes: **Clearing out the clutter in my body allows me to be a strong dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.**
- N. First we'll hear from Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. So, turn with me in your bibles to 1 Corinthians 6, starting in verse 12. The Corinthians church needed some perspective from Paul about what God thought about their bodies...and how they were to treat their bodies. Let's read...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- B. This encouragement and caution from Paul gave the Corinthians a lot of clarity that addressed the problems they were facing as a church. There were food law debates about who can eat what. There was a faction in the church that was struggling with some of the cultural practices around sexuality. Paul's encouragement throughout this letter is a call to discipleship and being witnesses, which they could NOT do when their lives were cluttered.
- C. Paul's answer was to sum it up by asking the rhetorical question, "...do you not know that your body is a temple (a sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit within you...?" And... "Glorify God in your body."
- D. See, Paul knew that, just like God created the soul of every person, He also created the BODY of each one. Even though our souls are eternal and our bodies are temporal in their current form, God created our bodies and souls to be used for God's purposes.
  - i. In Psalm 139:13-16, we read these words: For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being

- made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.”
- ii. God formed each person - woven together like a weaver creates a fabric on a loom...or like a carver creates out of a raw piece of wood. Your body was created by God.
  - iii. So, just like we said with our souls - which are also created by God for his purposes - our bodies are God’s.
  - iv. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”
  - v. Paul also said, right after he wrote that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, in chapter 6 that we read, these bodies, “...which you have from God, and (do you not know) that you are not your own?”
  - vi. Paul’s proclamation here is that our bodies were created by God, are temples of the Holy Spirit, and are not our own, but God’s.
- E. That changed the perspective of the Corinthians! And, Paul said that they have the choice about what to DO with their bodies. They could eat what they wanted. They could unite with a prostitute, even. They could be part of the body of Christ or not.
- F. None of that changed the facts: God created their bodies, their body ARE a temple of the Holy Spirit, and they are not, ultimately, their own, even though they have free will to choose.
- G. Paul then reminded the church that they were BOUGHT with a price... meaning that they have been reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. And when you’re bought by God, you are no longer your own, but God’s.
- H. Therefore, your call and command is to glorify God with your bodies. And not just your **individual** body, but **collectively** as bodies who are, together, part of the body of Christ, the Church.
- I. What that meant to the church was:
- i. #1) it’s not about the food you eat or don’t eat, really, although it has SOMETHING to do with that. It’s about the fact that you must care for your body through the food you eat because it’s a holy temple of the Holy Spirit. And...
  - ii. #2) don’t connect your body with sexual sin, or any other form of sin, because you are part of the body of Christ and the LAST thing you want to do in front of a holy God is connect that which He made with that which He detests and can’t stand for.

- J. The Corinthians had clutter in their bodies related to food and sexuality and even maybe the ways they viewed their bodies.
- K. **Clearing out the clutter in my body allows me to be a strong dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.**

### 3. Application

- A. Now, I'm not sure what you thought of when you read the title of today's message. You may have concluded that I would stand up here and lecture us about the food we eat and the beverages we drink. You may have thought that I'd say that God wants you to eat more salad and vegetables, stop snacking after 7pm, and get to the gym 5 times per week.
- B. The fact is: God DOES not NOT want you to do that. God wants you to eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and cut out those things which are not good for you. He loves you and cares about your well-being in every aspect of your life!
- C. The doctors tell us the same things for different reasons. This is not something we don't know and haven't heard before. We know that when we eat a better diet, we FEEL better. And when we FEEL better we can do more for the Lord and for those to whom we minister in our church, community, and families.
- D. However, Paul did not tell the church to take care of their bodies so they would feel guilty about the fact that they ate that extra piece of pie or didn't go to the gym when they said they would.
- E. Paul wrote what he wrote to the church so that they would declutter their bodies of all the nutritional, sexual, and recreational junk that was getting in the way of their relationship with God and others...so that they can be more available to God and to others, like Jesus commanded in Mark 12.
- F. Our application today is practical in some ways, but also gives us a bigger perspective on the purpose of decluttering our bodies.
- G. First is: **Take care of your physical body**
  - i. When I was younger, I didn't always heed this encouragement. I ate what I wanted or could afford, I slept when I felt like it, and I didn't always keep my body out of harm's way. It wasn't until I married Stacy, who was NOT like that, that I began to think more about what I ate, etc., as an adult. She's now the one that keeps me on track with vegetables, and more healthy foods, and exercise.
  - ii. But it's more than just that. It's the fact that when I'm healthy, I can serve the church and serve my family in a way that pleases God.
  - iii. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:1 "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God."

- iv. We have a higher purpose than just staying alive and staying healthy. Our purpose in taking care of our bodies is so that we can be more available to God...to be a living sacrifice for God, which is #2.

## H. **Be a living sacrifice for God**

- i. As much as we want to declutter our bodies for ourselves, our main purpose is to stay available for God as living sacrifices.
- ii. Romans 12:1-2 says, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God’s mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- iii. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul writes, “So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”
- iv. A physical living sacrifice is a body that’s willing to do what God is asking to worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly. This is the call of the Methodists to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.
- v. If you’re not taking care of your body, or have so much clutter in the way, that state has the potential to limit the amount of time and energy you have for God and others.
- vi. One incredible way to declutter your body in order to be a living sacrifice is through the practice of fasting. Jesus didn’t say to his disciples, “If you fast...” He said, “When you fast...” Fasting is the intentional process of removing something from your life for a period of time in order to make yourself more available to the relationship God is calling you to have. Maybe it’s food. Maybe it’s sexual relations. Maybe it’s couch time. It can be a number of things, but it always relates to the body in some way...and creates a hunger in us for God, more time for prayer, and worship.
- vii. Now, given all that, let me say this clearly: our bodies are not perfect and they don’t last forever. Sometimes, they fail us and diseases come, we get tired, we age, we get injured. Those are all factors in our ability to be available to God. This is not a judgment or meant to make us feel guilty. This, like the other decluttering places, is an invitation to allow God to move some things out of the way so that we can see more clearly the cross of Christ as work in our lives.
- viii. We aren’t meant to last forever, and we have to adjust to what life gives to us. What we can’t do it throw up our hands and give up. God may be calling you into a new way of being a living sacrifice today, different from the way He called you before.
- ix. To help figure that out, we get to number 3...

## **I. Join with others in your pursuit of holiness**

- i. Being a Christian is a team sport. It's not a solo venture. We know we have a body, but we also know from Paul that one body is part of the group of bodies that serve the Lord in this place.
  - ii. You don't have to do it alone...in fact, God does not WANT you to serve Him alone.
  - iii. Use your spiritual gifts, and join with others who are using THEIR spiritual gifts to build up the church and glorify God.
  - iv. Being holy is being set apart for God. When you set your body apart for God and walk with others who are doing the same thing, then not only do we get company but we have accountability partners and workers in the fields with us.
  - v. Jesus said, in Matthew 9:37, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." That's our prayer.
  - vi. Declutter your body of anything that stands in the way of giving yourself fully, and with strength, to the work of the Lord and then join other in the labor!
- J. Clearing out the clutter in my body allows me to be a strong dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

## **4. Conclusion**

- A. (PILE) This pile represents many things in our lives that have become clutter and need to be decluttered...moved out of the way so we can make more room for God's work in you and me.
- B. If you have emotional clutter in your heart, allow God to declutter your heart and restore the joy of His salvation.
- C. To declutter our souls, we allow God to remove anything that blocks our devotion to Him - anything we love more than we love God.
- D. If information is cluttering your mind, God's peace comes when we spend more time with Him and less time with our devices.
- E. And, to restore your strength and allow God to declutter your body, allow Him to remove the nutritional, sexual, and recreational clutter we are so tempted to keep stacking up in us.
- F. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself.
- G. He will never let us go, church! Let's pray and sing...
- H. **Let's Pray... PRAY!**