Lesson 9: God's Purpose For Our Health

I. Introduction

Dating back to last year and considering the last several lessons, we've been thinking together about how Christians should steward two of life's most significant gifts: money and time. We've been learning that God owns both, and that we are simply managers of what ultimately belongs to Him. Well, now it's time to apply those same truths to another area of life, one that feels deeply personal and perhaps even more sensitive: our health. The claim that God owns our health (meaning our body, the strength it has, the energy it produces) that concept might feel to be the most countercultural idea of our lessons to date.

What could feel more like "ours" than our bodies? Our world preaches that you should do whatever you want with your body because it's yours. "My body, my choice" is a deeply embedded worldview today. It tells us that we are the sole authority over what we do with our bodies. But Scripture speaks a different word. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 makes this as plain as can be, **"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** That truth is convicting. You are not your own. And that includes your health. If you belong to Jesus, then so does your health. That means your responsibility is to use your health in joyful submission to your Redeemer.

Just because we're given something doesn't mean we automatically know how to use it properly. Kids can turn almost anything into a toy: rubber bands become slingshots, the dog becomes a wrestling partner, paper bags become noise-makers. We can misuse gifts just as easily as we can enjoy them. And the same is true with our health. We have tremendous freedom in how we use our bodies, but that freedom flourishes only when it stays rooted in God's design. Romans 12:1 urges us this way, **"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."** That verse applies to your diet, your sleep, your exercise, your rest and relaxation. Our bodies, whether we are strong or weak today, healthy or sick today, are to be offered to God as acts of worship.

The questions we want to start with all begin with "why?" We're used to asking "Why?" when things go wrong with our health. "Why did I have to get sick, *today* of all days?" "Why would God allow this diagnosis?" "Why isn't God healing me?" But have you ever asked "*Why?"* when things are going right? "Why has God given me this season of health?" "Why do I feel strong right now?" "Why do I still have the energy to do the things I do?"

Have you every thought about how we tend to notice pain, but not wellness? Sore throats remind us of our bodies with every swallow. But when we're healthy, we often live as though health is just…there. We take our health for granted, like the air we breathe. And yet, James 1:17 reminds us, **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights…"** That includes your health. And if health is a gift then it comes with a purpose. We cannot steward our health well until we ask why God gave it to us in the first place.

Imagine asking the average person on the street why their health matters. What kind of answers would you hear? Probably something like: To live longer, to feel happier, to be successful, to stay independent. All of those answers make sense in a world where the self is the center. If life is all about my comfort, my pleasure, my success, then of course health is valuable only in so far as it helps me get what I want. But now imagine asking a mature Christian the same question. What might they say?

1. To be alive so I can praise God (*Psalm 146:2*: "I will praise the LORD as long as I live…")
2. To be of service to others (*Galatians 5:13*: "Through love serve one another.")

3. Because our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 6:19*)
4. Because health is a glimpse of the wholeness to come in heaven (*Revelation 21:4*)

That's a totally different framework. It's a view of health that starts with God's design, and giving Him His glory that's due to Him. The biggest difference between a worldly and a biblical view of health is rooted in what we believe God thinks about health. That's the lens we want to look through in this lesson.

Just like we did with money and time, we need to begin with a clear and countercultural assumption: Your health belongs to God. You are not the final authority over your body, He is! And that's the best gift! The One who owns your health is the same One who gave His Son to redeem your soul. Psalm 100:3 says, **"Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."** He created your body, He sustains your body, and He has a purpose for your body, even when it's weak, I'd go so far as to say *especially* when it's weak. For the rest of this lesson, we're going to explore together what the Bible says about God's purposes for our health, so that we can walk wisely, live gratefully, and offer every ounce of strength back to the One who gave it.

II. Our Health Belongs To God

God owns us because He made us. If you're in Christ, then not only did God make your body, but He purchased it with the blood of Christ. So that makes you doubly His. You belong to Him by creation and by redemption. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul makes this point explicitly. Writing to believers in Corinth who were compromising their bodies through sexual sin, Paul roots his warning in ownership. **"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** Notice that the command to glorify God in your body stems from God's authority. Paul's reminding us of something far more important: you don't own you. Your body is a temple which is God's dwelling place. And it's not yours to do with as you please.

Now, to be fair, some Christians have taken these verses and twisted them into self-centered motivations: "*If my body is God's temple, then I need to preserve it at all costs.*" "*I'll go all in on exercise, supplements, skincare, and health food, because this is me honoring God.*" But very often, what starts as a desire to "care for the temple" becomes an obsession with *how the temple looks*, rather than what the temple is for. We weren't given our bodies to become consumed with them. We were given our bodies to serve Christ, not sculpt them into idols for everyone (including ourselves) to worship. 1 Timothy 4:8 gives us a proper sense of proportion, **"For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way…"** Paul's not saying physical health doesn't matter because it certainly does, it's just not the ultimate end. It's a means to an end. We have severely missed the mark if the goal of health is to look great, feel great, and be admired or coveted by others. The goal of health is to be able to use every part of who we are for God's purposes.

That includes being fully surrendered to God's sovereignty over our health. Deuteronomy 32:39 says, **"See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand."** It doesn't get much clearer than that. God rules over every cell in your body. He gives life, and He takes it away. He gives energy, and He gives exhaustion. He gives wellness, and He allows sickness. Why? Because He owns you. And He is working all things (including your health) for His purpose. That's why Paul says again in Romans 14:8, **"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."** That includes the state of your health this very day. Whether you're full of vitality or facing long-term illness, whether you're in the prime of life or the slow decline of age, you belong to Him. And everything He ordains for your body is part of His plan for your good and His glory.

Romans 8:28 assures us, **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."** That "all things" includes your present health, your aches, your weakness, even the limitations you *didn't* choose. God is in control of it all, and He will not waste any of it. Psalm 56:8 reminds us that God keeps track of every tear, every toss in the night. **"You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?"** The Christian can say with confidence, "God gave me my body. God owns my body. And God has a loving, sovereign purpose for everything He allows or withholds."

What are the two foundational truths we stand on when it comes to stewarding our health?

1. All Our Health Comes from God

Job 1:21 says, **"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."** We don't own our strength any more than we own our money or our time. Whether we feel fantastic or frail, it's all from Him. That means we don't have the right to boast about good health, *"Look how disciplined I am!"* Nor do we have the right to complain about poor health, *"God, how dare You?"* All of it belongs to Him. Our role is to trust in His sovereign care. Philippians 4:11-12 teaches us, **"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content…In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need."** That contentment includes health. We trust that what God gives (or withholds) is for our greatest good and His greater glory.

2. We Are to Use Our Health for God

We often treat our health like it's there to serve us: *"I'll get healthy so I can feel better, look better, enjoy life more.*" But health is not ultimately for self-use. It's for God's use. Just like with money and time, health is not something we split between God and ourselves, our health is entirely His. 2 Corinthians 5:15 says, **"[Christ] died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."** Your health (whether abundant or limited today) is to be spent for God's purposes. Yes, that includes taking care of your body. Ephesians 5:29 affirms, **"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church…"**

III. Three Purposes For Health

If God owns our health, then the next question is, "What does God want us to do with it?"
In other words, what's the point of being healthy? Why does God give some of us strength, energy, and long seasons of wellness? In the same way that God gives money not so we can hoard it, and gives time not so we can waste it, He gives health not so we can serve ourselves with it, but so that we can steward it for His purposes. And when we look to Scripture, we can discern at least three clear purposes that God has for our health. Let's look at the first:

A. To Illustrate God's Kingdom

This might not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think about health, but it's a profound truth: God often uses physical healing in Scripture to illustrate His kingdom. We know from Romans 8:22 that we live in a world that is groaning. Creation itself is broken because of sin, **"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."** This groaning includes our bodies. Disease, injury, aging, and fatigue are part of the curse. One of the ways Jesus demonstrated the reality of the kingdom was by restoring health to the sick.

When John the Baptist's disciples came to Jesus with the question, *"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"* Jesus' response in Matthew 11:4-5 pointed to His healing ministry, **"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."** Jesus was echoing the prophecies of *Isaiah 29*, *Isaiah 35*, and *Isaiah 61,* where the healing of the body was prophesied as part of the Messiah's arrival. Consider Isaiah 35:5-6, **"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy."** The healing ministry of Christ oriented people's minds to a time when the curse would be broken, it brought about hope. It made people think, "*This is what the world will look like when the King is fully enthroned!"* That means that our health ought to be a sign to others about a restored Kingdom. It's a reminder to all of what God is doing in all of creation. Romans 8:23 says, **"And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."** *The redemption of our bodies* is key. God is not content to save your soul and toss away your body. He's redeeming all of you. That's why Philippians 3:21 promises that Christ **"will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body…"** Your health then, becomes a small picture of that larger promise. When your body is working well, when you feel strong, alert, and pain-free, let it point you forward. Let it stir in you the hope of full restoration. Let it remind you: *"This is just a taste. The real kingdom is coming."*

1 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us, **"What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?"** Health is a gift, and it's a gift meant to cause us to praise God. When God grants us seasons of wellness, we should do three things:

1. Praise God for His kindness **"Bless the Lord, O my soul… who heals all your diseases."** (*Psalm 103:2-3*)
2. Let it fuel our hope for eternity **"Behold, I am making all things new."** (*Revelation 21:5*)
3. Use it to serve others and proclaim the gospel **"Through love, serve one another."** (*Galatians 5:13*)

We must remember that our spiritual health is even more urgent than our physical health. In Matthew 5:29, Jesus says something shocking about sin and the body, **"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away… It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell."** Jesus is saying that the eternal health of your soul matters more than the temporary health of your body. It's good to care for our bodies, but it's better to pursue holiness. And best of all is when both serve the glory of God. Your health is meant to illustrate God's kingdom. It's a picture of redemption. Let's walk in faith and point others to the One who makes all things new.

B. To Serve

When we ask what God's purposes are for our health, one of the clearest biblical answers is this: God gives us health so that we can use it in the service of others. In Philippians 1:21-26, the Apostle Paul models this perspective beautifully, **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me… My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account… for your progress and joy in the faith."** At this point in Paul's life, death was a real possibility. He looked forward to being with Christ. Paul desired to keep living out of his love to serve others. A love rooted in service. **"To remain in the flesh,"** he says, **"is more necessary on your account.**" What a beautiful way to think about your health! Paul saw his continued life as fruitful labor. And he believed that as long as God gave him breath, it was to be used for the growth and joy of others in Christ. This frames for us what is perhaps the most profound stewardship question regarding health: "How can I spend the health God gives me in service to

others?" If we're not spending it we're likely hoarding it. And if we're hoarding it, then our health has become about us.

Our Bodies Are Not Trophies

This idea may feel counterintuitive in a culture that idolizes youth, appearance, and self-care. But consider the words of Rachel Jankovic in "Loving the Little Years", *"Our bodies are tools, not treasures… Let it be used. By the time you die, you want to have a very dinged and dinted body. Those are the right kind of damages… We are not to treat our bodies like museum pieces. They were not given to us to preserve, they were given to us to use."* That doesn't mean we're careless, but we ought to be purposeful. When we care for our health as a way of maximizing our usefulness for others, we're practicing faithful stewardship.

Romans 12:1 makes this connection between body and worship, **"I appeal to you therefore, brothers… to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."** And how is that worship lived out? Romans 12:4-5 continues, **"For as in one body we have many members… so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."** Worship is embodied through service. To serve others is to serve Christ. Matthew 25:40 reminds us, **"As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."**

How We Spend Our Health

What does spending our health right look like practically? It looks like the mom who rises early and stays up late because she's pouring herself out for her children in feeding, teaching, praying, correcting, and comforting them. Her body bears the marks of service. And in God's eyes that's beautiful. It looks like the adult child who gently lifts their aging parent into a wheelchair, or the woman who bruises her body caring for the seniors on the memory care floor. It looks like the tradesman who goes to work every day despite aching knees, or the nurse who comes home weary from a twelve-hour shift. It's the body spent in love. This is tool-usage, and it's beautiful. Romans 6:13 says, **"Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God… and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."** Our hands, feet, backs, and voices are God's instruments for His work in the world.

Health Stewardship Involves Body Maintenance

Of course using your body doesn't mean abusing it. Faithful stewardship also means caring for your health so you can serve longer, better, and more joyfully. Paul even tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23, **"No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."** God may heal miraculously, but He also calls us to manage wisely. That includes planning to sleep, choosing good nutritious foods, moderately exercising, and finding appropriate medical treatment where appropriate. Missionary Jim Elliot, who gave his life bringing the gospel to unreached peoples, once told his mother, *"I wrestle solely for the strength and coordination of muscle tone that the body receives while working out, with the ultimate end that of presenting a more useful body as a living sacrifice."* The right heart posture is to prepare your body for sacrifice.

Service Through Suffering

And what about when serving takes a toll on our bodies? Philippians 2:30 introduces us to Epaphroditus, who was sent by the Philippians to minister to Paul's needs in prison, **"He nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me."** His health was spent for

others. And Paul says in verse 29, **"Honor such men."** Paul saw his whole life as an offering in 2 Timothy 4:6, **"I am already being poured out as a drink offering.**" The ultimate example is Jesus Christ, who said at the Last Supper in Luke 22:19, **"This is my body, which is given for you."** He gave His body fully, sacrificially, and joyfully, all for our salvation. When we give our health for the good of others, we walk in His footsteps.

Proper stewardship means knowing when to exert your strength and when to rest to preserve it for later service. You might be wrestling through a treatment plan for cancer, or perhaps you're in your sixties and have your own limitations but you are helping your aging parents with care. In such moments, we should be asking, "How can I use this time and strength (how little I may be able to give) to glorify God and bless others?" 2 Corinthians 12:9, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."** Regardless of whether you are strong or weak, able or limited, ask the question, *"How can I offer my body today as a living sacrifice for the glory of God and the good of others?"* That is true stewardship.

C. To Rightly Enjoy God's Creation

Part of what it means to be a faithful steward is not only to serve and obey God, but to delight in Him. Our Heavenly Father delights when His children enjoy His good gifts with thankfulness and humility. Psalm 37:4 calls us to **"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart."** One of those God-given desires is the enjoyment of His good creation, which includes the health of our bodies.

As we've seen, Jesus willingly laid down His body in obedience to the Father and love for His people. Jesus delighted to do the will of God. In the same way, God is glorified when *we* joyfully obey Him. A joyful steward is one who delights in his Master's will and rejoices in the gifts He's given. We ought to take spiritual inventory and think through how much we grumble and cling so selfishly to personal comfort, then repent and choose to walk in grateful contentment and trust. That includes how we receive and experience our physical health. If God has created your body, and if He has given you health, then part of your stewardship is to enjoy His creation through your body.

<u>Enjoying Creation With Thanksgiving</u>

Let's start with 1 Timothy 4:4-5, **"For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer."** Paul writes these words to combat legalistic false teachers who were promoting a distorted kind of spirituality, one that said true holiness came from rejecting certain foods, who forbid people to marry. But Paul corrects this error by rooting our freedom in the goodness of creation. God made it all. And when we receive His creation with thankfulness, it becomes an act of worship. That includes food, relationships, beauty, even the senses themselves. When was the last time you thanked the Lord after the smell of fresh bread, the sound of laughter, the touch of a loved one, the rhythm of music, the satisfaction after exercise? Those are all gifts meant to lift our eyes to the Giver.

Psalm 104:14-15 says, **"You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart."** God designed the earth to sustain life and to bring gladness and strength, let us thank Him always for that.

<u>Examples of Gratitude</u>

I will make the assumption that all of us give thanks to the Lord before every meal. I would encourage you to think about thanking God not only for the provision, but for the ability to taste, and the texture, and the skill of whoever prepared it (even if He gave you the skill), and the joy of sharing it with others.

What about giving thanks to the Lord whenever we solve a problem? Certainly, it was your ability to think and reason, but isn't that ability a gift? Thank God for the cognitive clarity He has given you, for the mental health that enables you to think, reason, and create.

After exercising, have you ever thanked the Lord in that moment for the ability to exercise at all? Thank God for muscles that move, for lungs that breathe, and for endorphins that remind us we're alive.

If you are married, when was the last time that you thanked the Lord for your spouse? Thank God for the joy of intimacy, for the pleasure that is both sacred and designed by Him (*Genesis 2:24*, *Proverbs 5:18-19*).

When exploring creation, whether you're hiking a trail, swimming in a lake, enjoying a starlit sky, praise God for how He uses your health to draw you into the wonder of His world.

If we slow down enough to think through multiple moments each day, there are countless opportunities for gratitude. James 1:17 tells us, **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights…"** If we enjoy God's good gifts without thanking Him, we rob Him of the praise He is due and we stunt our own joy. Gratitude multiplies enjoyment, while entitlement diminishes it.

<u>Wrong Ways to Enjoy Creation</u>

But of course, there's a reason this section is titled "rightly enjoying God's creation." Because not all enjoyment is holy, and not every use of the body honors God. When we seek pleasure apart from God (without gratitude, or limits, or purpose) we quickly slip into idolatry. That's what Romans 1:25 warns about, **"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator…"** This happens when we make pleasure the goal, rather than God. When we elevate our desires above His commands. This is where addiction, gluttony, sexual sin, and other abuses of the body come in. These are nothing less than sinful deceptions that turn God's good gifts into harmful gods.

Addiction, for example, offers bodily temporary pleasure. Whether it's alcohol, drugs, pornography, or overeating, these things hijack the body's design and dull the soul's hunger for God. Romans 6:23 warns, **"The wages of sin is death…"** And 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 reminds us that abuse of God's gifts (even something as sacred as the Lord's Supper) can bring real consequences, **"For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died."** Sin affects not only our soul but our health. Whether through indulgence or neglect, when we ignore God's instructions for how to live in our bodies, we invite brokenness. That includes under nourishing ourselves, refusing rest, self-harm, or spiritual laziness that leads to physical atrophy.

<u>True Enjoyment Comes Through Obedience</u>

Obedience leads to freedom. The commands of God are absolutely liberating. Like tracks for a train, God's commandments will guide us right to the proper destination, in fact, it's impossible for the train to get there without them. When we follow God's design, we are set free to truly enjoy life the way it was meant to be lived. Psalm 119:45 says, **"I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts."**

Freedom comes through submission. Joy is found when we trust in God. That's true even in how we experience our health. Our bodies were made to help us see God more clearly. When we taste, move, climb, laugh, breathe, we are constantly being reminded that God is good.

Creation Proclaims God's Praise

Psalm 19:1 declares, **"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork."** But you could say the same about your own body. Psalm 139:14 says, **"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."** That means when you use your body to experience God's creation (when you hike a trail, sing in a choir, swing a baby in your arms, help someone with yard work) you are joining in creation's chorus of praise. God gave you a body to enjoy Him. And when we use our health to rightly enjoy His world, with thanksgiving and delight, we are doing just what He designed us to do. 1 Corinthians 10:31 gives us the final word, **"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."**

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, let's take a deep breath and rejoice in what sets the Christian faith apart from every other worldview. We are stewards of our bodies today, but we are heirs of glorified bodies tomorrow. We spend our strength now because we know a greater strength is coming. We offer our bodies in weakness now because God has promised to raise them in glory.

The Christian honours God by using their body for what it was made for. We spend our health in worship, and service, precisely because we know that what we offer to God is precious to Him. Romans 12:1 again reminds us that offering our bodies as a living sacrifice is our "**spiritual worship.**" Our stewardship is never in vain. We serve with tired bodies now, but one day, we will serve Him with resurrected bodies, free from pain, free from sickness, free from weakness and decay. 1 Corinthians 15:42-43 says, **"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."**

What a future! Your worn-out body, your scarred hands, your aching knees, your stretched skin, your gray, they are the marks of a life poured out in hope. All of life is preparing us for the glory that's coming. As Paul writes in Philippians 3:20-21, **"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself."** We are not our own. We are Christ's. And one day, we will be remade to be like Him. So spend your body for God's purposes. Serve others with the strength He provides. Delight in His good creation with gratitude and humility. And live today in light of the future glory that awaits you.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of our bodies. Thank You that You are not just the Creator of our souls but the Designer of our skin, our bones, our breath, and our strength. We confess that so often we have either misused or ignored the gift of health. We've either worshipped our bodies or neglected them, lived for ourselves or forgotten to give thanks. Forgive us, Lord. Teach us what it means to steward our health with joy and purpose. Help us to spend ourselves for the sake of Your kingdom, to serve others with love, and

to delight in the good gifts You've given, all the while remembering that our bodies are not our own, but Yours. Lord, in our sicknesses, give us patience. In our weakness, give us faith. In our strength, give us humility. And in our health, give us the courage to use it for Your glory. May our lives be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to You, this is our spiritual worship. And above all, fill us with the hope that one day, You will transform our lowly bodies to be like Your Son's glorious body. We long for that day. We wait for it with joy. Until then, help us be faithful stewards. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the One who gave His body for us.

Amen.