

*Weighed
by the Word*

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DEDICATION

To all the women who built into my life: my grandmother, my mother, my sister, my two daughters and two daughters-in-law, as well as ladies who thought through these particular lessons with me. God used a host of friends, pastors, and, most notably, my husband, to build into my life. To God be the glory!

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Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	5
	<i>How to Use This Study</i>	7
LESSON 1	<i>My Body, His Treasure</i>	9
	Genesis 1—3; Daniel 5	
LESSON 2	<i>My Body, His Tapestry</i>	19
	Ruth 1:16; 2:11, 12; 3:11; Proverbs 31; 1 Timothy 4:4–6	
LESSON 3	<i>My Body, His Reflection</i>	29
	Philippians 1—3	
LESSON 4	<i>My Body, His Tablet</i>	37
	2 Corinthians 3:1–12; 14–18	
LESSON 5	<i>My Body, His Vessel</i>	45
	2 Corinthians 2:12–16; 4:3–14; 11:22–29; 12:7–10	
LESSON 6	<i>My Body, His Tent</i>	53
	2 Corinthians 4:13–18; 5:1–21	
LESSON 7	<i>My Body, His Temple</i>	61
	1 Corinthians 6:12—7:5	
LESSON 8	<i>My Body, His Priority</i>	69
	Matthew 6:19–34; Luke 12:1–34; 1 Timothy 6:6–19	
LESSON 9	<i>My Body, His Tool</i>	77
	Romans 12:1–21	
LESSON 10	<i>My Body, His Plan</i>	87
	Genesis 3:1–6; Matthew 1:1–16; 4:11; Luke 1:34, 35	
LESSON 11	<i>My Body, His Victory</i>	95
	1 Corinthians 15:19–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17	
	<i>Leader’s Guide</i>	103

Preface

With so much pressure to be body conscious, to watch our diets, to check our weight, to exercise regularly, we continue to measure our bodies by pictures in magazines, ideal weight charts, size of clothes, or numbers on the measuring tape or scale. But in our attempts to “measure up,” we often find ourselves discouraged or dissatisfied with ourselves, especially with our bodies. We constantly measure ourselves by numerous *external* standards, and often forget to measure our bodies by the *eternal* standard of the Bible. It is as though we cannot come to terms with our physical bodies.

As Christians, we emphasize our doctrine, our thinking, our minds—all of this being necessary—but we do not quite know how to relate Christianity to the bodies we have to put up with on a day-to-day basis, whether sick, healthy, fat, skinny, etc. One Christian psychologist suggests that we Christians often “live from the neck up.” The physical body is an enigma to us.

This dilemma does not come by accident. Satan is out to get us through our bodies! Think of billboards, TV programs, magazines: Satan targets our bodies every way he can. He incites men and the media to exploit the female body. Often, while he’s exploiting the body on one hand, Satan, as “an angel of light,” cleverly suggests “remedies” for the problems sin causes, remedies that further entangle women and rob them of peace. He steers women farther away from God and His Word.

What does God think? God has an investment in our bodies. He created them; He wants to use them. He plans a future for them; He will raise them. He sent His Son to inhabit a physical body and to die in a physical body. The Father then raised that physical body so He might redeem our physical bodies. And God the Holy Spirit is content to dwell in the bodies of all who receive the Son. Someday we shall see Christ in His physical body and we in ours. We share Job’s hope, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25, 26).

We base our hope on the past work of Jesus in the body. And we focus

our eyes on the future hope of seeing Him in a body, yet in the present we struggle with this body, our physical frame. What does the Bible really say about our physical bodies? And how do our bodies measure up against the standards of Scripture? How do we relate our present Christian life to the bodies we live in? Thankfully, God is not silent on this issue.

With this Bible study you will learn to view your physical body from God's point of view, to weigh yourself by the scale of His Word. You will be encouraged to get involved in a "fitness routine."

You may be interested to know that a couple of fitness terms are actually Bible terms. Paul told the Philippians to "work out" their own salvation, reminding them it was their responsibility to grow in the Lord and in obedience to His Word. And you might remember Belshazzar in Daniel's day, a proud king who exalted himself against the Lord. The handwriting on the wall declared him to be "weighed" and "found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). God had weighed Belshazzar, and God weighs, or evaluates, what we do in our bodies as well.

May we be "fit" for His service!

How to Use This Study

Each lesson in this study is divided into four sections—a spiritual fitness routine. Give at least three days a week to the study of each lesson. Follow these suggestions as you prepare.

Fitness Goal

Read the fitness goal for the lesson and answer the questions to yourself alone. Think about this goal as you go through the Warm Up, Work Out, and Weigh In sections.

Warm Up

Take one day to read the introduction and to write out the verse to memorize. This section helps you become familiar with the week's topic. Read the Work Out passages and begin to memorize the key verse.

Work Out

Divide the Work Out questions into a two-day study. This section requires you to look more closely at a particular Bible passage. Read the passage and answer the questions, looking for what God says about the body.

Weigh In

Visit the Weigh In questions throughout the week. This section provides opportunities to evaluate yourself by the Scriptural principles you are learning.

As you Weigh In, you will evaluate where you stand in relation to a particular Bible truth you have studied. Identify the things you should learn or attitudes or actions you should change in relation to your body. Replay the thoughts and re-pray the prayers, applying God's Word to your life.

Pulse Check

Throughout the book are short time-outs called Pulse Check. These provide a moment for you to take in and think about what you have been learning. These questions do not require written responses.

My Body, His Treasure

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

FITNESS GOAL

I will realize my value simply because I was made in the image of God. *Who am I? And does anybody care?*

From the moment we hold a precious newborn in our arms, until the day we put the precious body of a loved one into the grave, we love these bodies made of flesh. We cannot think of a person without his or her body. Since we know that the body is precious, why are we often so uncomfortable with the bodies God gave us? Could it be that something or someone has distorted our view of reality? Could it be that this discomfort is inherent with fallen humanity?

Throughout these lessons, you will examine God’s purposes for your body. You will wrestle to get your feelings in line with God’s truth, since your feelings about yourself often affect your actions. Specifically, how you feel about your body often reflects how you feel about yourself. Your image of yourself can affect how you behave in public, the challenges you may undertake, and even the Christian ministries you may decide to try. You may opt out of God-given opportunities because of a faulty body consciousness. Thus, failure to *conform* may keep you from being able to *perform* as God desires.

Therefore, it is important that you know God’s view of your body. Rather than evaluate, or weigh, yourself by a set of standards in the media and come up short, you can weigh yourself by God’s standards and accept yourself as God sees you, a woman of value created by Him.

WARM UP

Write out Genesis 1:27 and begin committing it to memory.

Read Daniel 5.

1. a. What did Daniel remind the king about his breath (v. 23)?

b. How did the king “weigh in” by God’s standards (v. 27)?

Note: “Wanting” in Daniel 5:27 means “lacking.”

In the case of King Belshazzar, we find that weight involved a lot more than pounds on a scale. God weighed Belshazzar according to His own spiritual standard.

Society, on the other hand, weighs (or appraises) people by earthly standards, sometimes causing Christian women to lose sight of God’s standards for their lives. Everywhere a woman looks, she is bombarded by pressures to conform to human standards for her body.

2. How do magazines and TV ads try to set the standards, or image, for the female body? List three examples.

3. Women often struggle with aging, anorexia, bulimia, disease, sex, style, or weight. How do these problems relate to a woman’s view of herself and the pressure to maintain an ideal image?

4. According to Genesis 1:27, in whose image did God create woman?

WORK OUT

God's Image

Read Genesis 1—3.

First, being created in God's image gives people value. God stamped His image on His human creation from the very beginning. It is this special act of creation and God's image that we bear as humans that give us purpose and value. Though God is spirit and His image within our bodies is not a physical entity, He created our bodies with enough complexity to be able to express His image. No mere animal can accomplish this.

Second, being created in God's image gives people the ability to have fellowship. God gave to men and women three attributes that belong to Him: will, emotion, and intellect. This means that human beings have the ability to make decisions, to express feeling, and to reason. We also have the ability to enunciate our thoughts and feelings. In the Garden, Adam and Eve were able to communicate verbally with God and with each other. They could have fellowship, communicate, share ideas with each other, make decisions, and respond emotionally to their environment.

Third, being created in God's image involves the ability to manage, or have dominion over, creation. This ability reflects God's right to rule. One of the first responsibilities God gave to the man and woman was to have dominion over what He had created (Genesis 1:26). God gave mankind a wonderful pattern and privilege right from the start. We have every reason to be thankful and filled with awe at the wonder of all of His creation, but especially His creation of our own selves. Dr. Greg Couser asked the question, "What makes a body somebody?" and answered it this way: "Biblically, it is the image of God. Every person bears this image. . . . The image of God conveys value upon us as human beings and equips us for the enormous responsibility to be stewards over the world and ourselves, in order to reflect glory back on our loving Creator."¹

1. What thoughts in Psalm 8 indicate the value that God places on man?

God's Person

Our key verse, Genesis 1:27, shows us something else about the image of God. When we read, "God said, Let us make man in our image" (v. 26), we hear one person speaking to others, indicating that more than one person was involved in creation. Under normal circumstances, if there's more than one person, there's more than one image, but this verse reveals something unusual: a plurality in the image of God.

2. How does Colossians 2:9 help us understand this plurality?

Bible scholars have used the word "Trinity" to describe God, because throughout the Bible three Persons are acknowledged as God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We also find these same three Persons active at the time of Creation.

3. Read the following passages and identify which Person of the Godhead is being credited with Creation.

Genesis 1:2

Genesis 2:7

Exodus 20:11

Job 33:4

John 1:2

Hebrews 1:8–10

God's Affirmation

An eternal form of fellowship was going on inside the Trinity before God created man. God wasn't lonely. He didn't need man. Instead, He wanted man to experience fellowship with Him.

4. In Genesis 1:31, what did God conclude about all of His creation?

PULSE CHECK

Do you always sense your value to God? Do you identify with the glory and honor with which He has crowned you?

As indicated earlier, somewhere along the line, Christian women may start viewing their bodies differently than God views them. In Genesis 3 we discover why.

The enemy of God and man visited the Garden of Eden.

5. How did Satan plant doubt about God's word, as recorded in Genesis 3:1? Note: Read Revelation 12:9 if you have any doubt about who the serpent was.

6. Read Genesis 3:4–6. How did Satan's temptation appeal to Eve's physical body?

Satan uses the same tactic today. He continues to plant doubts about God's Word in people's minds. And that holds true for the way a Christian woman feel about her body, as well. If he cannot directly attack the body, he will cause her to doubt God's design of her body by undermining her feelings and emotions about it. And he may very well use a woman's own desires to stimulate her to sin.

Sin had an immediate effect on Adam's and Eve's physical bodies.

7. According to Genesis 3:16–19, how would the punishment for their sin directly affect their bodies?

Sin distorted the image of God that Adam and Eve bore. As a result of sin, they experienced spiritual death. At this point the unhindered communication they had enjoyed with God was broken.

But sin also affected how Adam and Eve felt about their bodies.

8. How did Adam and Eve's feelings change toward their bodies from before sin to after? Compare Genesis 2:25 with 3:7–10.

Sin brought a new kind of body consciousness to man. And God responded to this new body consciousness.

God's Intervention

In addition to confronting and condemning Adam and Eve's sin, God cared for their bodies by covering them with animal skins that cost an animal its life. This would not be the last time an animal would give its life to demonstrate the death penalty resulting from sin.

Beyond caring for their temporal need, God protected Adam and Eve from an eternal state of separation from Him by removing them from the Garden and the tree of life. Instead, He told them of His plan to crush the seed of the serpent through a seed He would give to the woman. This was God's first step in His ultimate plan for redeeming the bodies of believers. He would even use Adam and Eve's physical bodies as the human ancestors of that Seed.

After Adam and Eve left the Garden, Satan continued his attack on people and their bodies. God has devoted an entire book to a man named Job, who endured a direct Satanic attack on his body (Job 2). How Job responded to and wrestled with God during this difficult time is recorded for our learning.

9. a. How did Satan attack Job's body (Job 2:7)?

- b. What did Satan conclude about such an attack (Job 2:3–7)?

10. According to Job 10:8–12 and 19:25 and 26, in spite of his infirmity, what assurances did Job have about his body?

11. Read Psalms 119:73 and 139:13–16.
 - a. What assurances did the psalmist have about the human body?

 - b. How does this truth reassure you?

God's Investment

When God first made His covenant with Abraham, He provided for the Children of Israel a concrete lesson about the importance of their bodies: He required a literal mark in their bodies to show that they belonged to Him.

12. According to Genesis 17:11–13, what was the sign God required in their bodies?

13. In the New Testament, Paul explained that God no longer requires a physical sign in believers' physical bodies. However, in Galatians 6:17, Paul said he carried marks in his body. Read 2 Corinthians 6:5 and 11:24 and 25. What marks did he bear?

While we do not need to be circumcised and may not bear physical scars, God still wants our bodies to evidence a real connection to the Lord Jesus. In the coming lessons, we will look for some of the ways God wants believers' bodies to evidence this connection.

God shows believers how much He values them by the marks the Son bears in His body.

14. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4, what happened to Christ's body?

15. Read Galatians 4:4–6. How did God use a woman's body to redeem our human bodies?

16. In 1 Peter 1:17–19, what do you learn about the price of our redemption?

17. From 1 Peter 2:24, how did the Son of God use His body to rescue us from our problem with sin?

God has a double claim on believers' bodies. First, God made and fashioned them. Then He bought them back. All three Persons of the Trinity had a part in both their creation and their redemption.

Let's not fool ourselves. If God cares this much about our bodies, Satan targets our bodies every way he can. Just as he entered God's creation in the beginning to mar the image God had made by bringing sin into the world, so he continues to attack the body and distort the image to prevent God's image from being seen clearly.

As Satan deceived Eve and brought death to God's creation, including the human body, and as Satan later thought he could destroy Christ's body on the cross, he tries to destroy the testimony of Christ's followers by attacking their fleshly bodies. Remember Job. In his attempt to get Job to turn from God, Satan went after his body. But don't think only of disease, death, and dying. Satan is quite content to use warm, living, healthy bodies as well—anything to get believers' focus off God.

WEIGH IN

1. Take your Bible, book, and pen and get alone in front of a mirror. Look at your body. What do you see? What do you think about what you see?

2. How do you feel about yourself most of the time? Check the statements that apply.
___ I feel like a failure.

___ I feel worthless.

___ I feel like a shadow that most people don't notice or care about.

___ I feel self-confident and strong.

___ I feel good about myself.

___ I feel honest about myself. I try to view myself as God sees me.

___ (Other) _____
_____.

3. Have you recognized that sin is the cause of a lot of human discomfort? Have you ever acknowledged your need of having Jesus create new life in you—new eternal life?
4. If you are a believer, ask God to show you how you might do a better job of revealing His image in you. Ask God to help you see yourself as He sees you, not as the world sees you.
5. What verses can you think about when you feel an unhealthy dissatisfaction with your body?

Note

1. Greg Couser, "What Makes a Body Somebody?" *Torch* (Spring–Summer 2007), 15.