

Becoming Physically Alive

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Fully Alive

3 John 2

Today, as part of the Fully Alive series, I'm going to be conducting an interview with Dr. Bill Malarkey who is Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. He is a practicing Endocrinologist and the Program Director of the Clinical Research Center. Much of Dr. Bill Malarkey's work has been focused on the impact of our emotions, our relationships and our spirituality upon our physical health.

We are in the midst of a campaign that we've titled "Fully Alive". And today is the last day for you to sign up to be a part of a Fully Alive small group.

Before I get to the interview with Dr. Malarkey, I want to give you some biblical context for thinking about your physical health. Some of you are sitting here wondering why we would be talking about physical health at church. You might say, "I get enough of this everywhere else in the world. I come to church to hear about my spiritual life. Why aren't we talking about prayer or worship or Bible study or evangelism?"

If anyone thinks that talking about our physical health and our bodies is not an appropriate subject for a church sermon, I want to suggest to you that you've seriously misunderstood God's purpose for your life.

The theme of the campaign is Fully Alive. The theme verse is from Habakkuk 2:

Habakkuk 2:4b The Message

But the person in right standing before God
through loyal and steady believing
is fully alive, *really* alive.

The phrase that we've been quoting throughout the campaign is borrowed from an early church father named Irenaeus who was a Bishop in France in the second century AD.

"The glory of God is a person fully alive."

In Irenaeus' day, there was a heresy that was spreading across Christianity. The heresy was known as Gnosticism. Gnostics said that the Christian ought to concentrate entirely on spiritual things, on the state of their souls. Gnostics were dualists. They taught that

Christ came only to redeem our spirits, not our bodies. In fact, Christians ought to reject everything with respect to the body. We should treat the body harshly. Shun almost all foods. Reject marriage and sex. The Gnostics even taught that Jesus himself didn't have a real human body – he was made up of spirit. And they said that we would live forever as pure spirits.

Irenaeus fought against this heresy. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is a person fully alive." Not just spiritually, but physically. No dualism. Rather, we human beings are one unified whole. And God wants our whole being to be fully alive.

Eugene Peterson who is a contemporary Christian spiritual writer said,

"We don't become more spiritual by becoming less human."

The truth is that Christianity is the most bodily of the world's religions. Along with Jews and Muslims, we believe that God himself created our bodies. But Christians also believe that God wants to inhabit our bodies.

The Apostle Paul says this:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Unlike Jews and Muslims, we Christians believe that God came to earth in a body. He created our bodies, he inhabits our bodies, he came to earth in a body. And Christians believe that our eternal state will be bodily. We're not going to be floating around forever like Casper the Friendly Ghost. We will spend eternity in new bodies on a new earth. As I often say at Easter – if you are unhappy with your body, good news! If you trust in Christ you will live forever in a new body that you will love! Christianity is the most bodily of any of the world's great religions.

But to set some biblical context for my interview with Dr. Bill Malarkey, I'd like to offer you three basic principles to think about what it means to become physically alive. Here's the first principle:

Physically alive people focus on both their souls and their bodies: the focus factor

3 John 2

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

Think about the typical magazine rack and how many magazines are devoted to our bodies.

There are dozens and dozens of others, all about the body. The message we constantly hear from every marketer and every advertiser and every magazine is that you are just a body. Every advertisement is about our bodies. Feeding our bodies. Pampering our bodies. Adorning our bodies. Comforting our bodies. Relaxing our bodies. Improving our bodies. Exercising our bodies. Clothing our bodies. Strengthening, feeding, and satisfying our bodies.

3 John 2

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

3 John 2 tells us that we human beings are more than bodies. We are bodies and souls. John was writing to a man named Gaius and he was concerned about Gaius' physical well-being, but also his spiritual well-being. The most thoughtful Christians, historically, reflected on Jesus' holistic concern for people's physical needs, but also their spiritual needs. As a result of that, the most thoughtful Christians in history focused upon both bodies and souls. They built and staffed hospitals. And they built churches. They built and staffed schools. And they built seminaries and monasteries. They started orphanages. They fought against slavery and alcoholism and drug addiction and prostitution. And they evangelized and printed Bibles and wrote Christian books. To be like Christ means we view ourselves as whole people – body and soul – called to love and care for other whole people.

We're going to see that in a minute when I interview Dr. Malarkey that there is an incredible interaction between the health of our souls and the health of our bodies. Physically alive people focus on both their souls and their bodies.

Here's the second principle:

Physically alive people shun silly diets and fitness fads: the food and fitness factor

There's no end to silly diets. Have you ever heard of the cabbage soup diet? Just like it sounds, the premise of this seven-day diet is to eat as much cabbage soup as is humanly possible. I think this was developed by the KGB in Russia. But like many other single food diets, this is a quick fix starvation plan that you cannot live on unless you're planning to spend your life in the bathroom.

Listen to some of this.

Day one: cabbage soup plus as much fruit as you like, excluding bananas.

Day two: cabbage soup plus vegetables including one baked potato with a little butter.
Day three: cabbage soup plus fruits and vegetables excluding potatoes and bananas.
Day four: cabbage soup plus up to 8 bananas and as much skim milk as you like.
Day five: **YOU'RE DEAD!**

No, that's not actually day five, but you get the idea.

Then in the 1980's, there was the grapefruit diet. The grapefruit diet recommended that you eat half a grapefruit before each meal and drink tons of black coffee, creating a gas and acid mix in your stomach that would burn up calories and give you an ulcer.

The best diet, researchers tell us, is the diet that works for you. There isn't a one-size-fits-all diet approach. Researchers tell us that there are multiple types of obesity. Some people do amazingly well on gluten-free diets. Others do well on low carb diets. Others on super high protein diets.

Physically alive people shun silly diets and fitness fads. There are all of these extreme fitness crazes. Have you seen the sledgehammer workout? There are all these women's fitness classes where someone who is a would-be Army drill instructor screams at women to lift the sledgehammer high above their head and swing it down. You think that could be a little dangerous?

Physical therapists and orthopedic surgeons are seeing more and more people suffering muscle tears and stress fractures from engaging in some kind of fitness fad. Find exercises that work for you! Walking, biking, jogging, dancing, swimming – exercise is great for you. During the month of March, why not join an exercise class at the Vineyard Community Center? During the month of March, our fantastic instructors are providing free sessions in a variety of our classes including:

Free Classes include Puro-Fitness, Re-FIT Dance, Shotokan Karate, Holy Yoga, Co-Ed Kickboxing, TRX Bootcamp, Adult Dance and Kids Gymnastics

And if you like one of these classes and want to continue, the Community Center will offer you savings on future classes.

For more information visit www.vineyardcommunitycenter.org or pick up a flyer in the lobby after the service

Physically alive people enlist healthy support: the friendship factor

This third principle tells us that physically alive people don't try to become physically alive on their own. The healthiest people are those who have friends. We get healthy together – we're better together. That's why we emphasize small groups here at

Vineyard Columbus. Let me share with you a couple of verses from the Bible about the importance of not trying to become physically alive on your own.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

⁹ Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
¹⁰ If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.

This is true of any exercise plan, any diet plan or anything else. If you try things on your own, you won't be consistent. You'll give up. That's why New Year's Resolutions don't work. Will power isn't enough. You need other people in your life.

Write this down. Everybody needs a buddy. You need one person who will be your partner to help you, to encourage you, to support you, to hold you accountable, to work out with you, to talk with you, to ask you how you are doing with your goals to become more physically alive.

Look at what the Bible says about small groups:

Hebrews 10:25

²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Notice, meeting together is a habit. Do you have that habit? This weekend is the last time you can sign up for a Fully Alive small group. We need friends who will keep us moving in a positive direction.

I want to introduce to you Dr. Bill Malarkey. As I said, Dr. Malarkey is Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine at The Ohio State University. He's a practicing Endocrinologist. His research area is the biological consequences of stress and resilience. He's had two books published along with over 200 published research papers. He's also been married to Joan for over 50 years and has 3 children and 7 grandchildren.

1. Have you found a connection between being relationally healthy and being physically healthy?

Studies:

- A. The Marriage study
- B. The caregiver study
- C. Other studies?

2. Have you found a connection between being emotionally healthy and being physically healthy?
Studies:
 - A. Twin studies
 - B. Adverse childhood events studies
 - C. Other studies?
3. Have you found a connection between being spiritually healthy and being physically healthy?
Studies
4. Where would you advise people to start in becoming physically healthy? What are some initial steps that people can take? Any brief advice for continuing to be physically healthy?

Benediction:

1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24 (The Message)

May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!