

Week of January 1, 2012

Thriving in a Fast-Food Culture

Passage Outline:

1. **Align with Christ** (Rom. 13:12-14)
2. **Avoid the Harmful** (Prov. 23:20-21)
3. **Adopt the Beneficial** (Dan. 1:8,11-20)

What This Lesson Is About?

We are called to align ourselves with Christ, and as we do so, we are encouraged to avoid those things that harm us physically and practice a healthy lifestyle for His honor.

How This Lesson Can Impact Your Life?

We can follow biblical standards for taking care of our bodies in order to bring honor to Christ and to serve His kingdom faithfully.

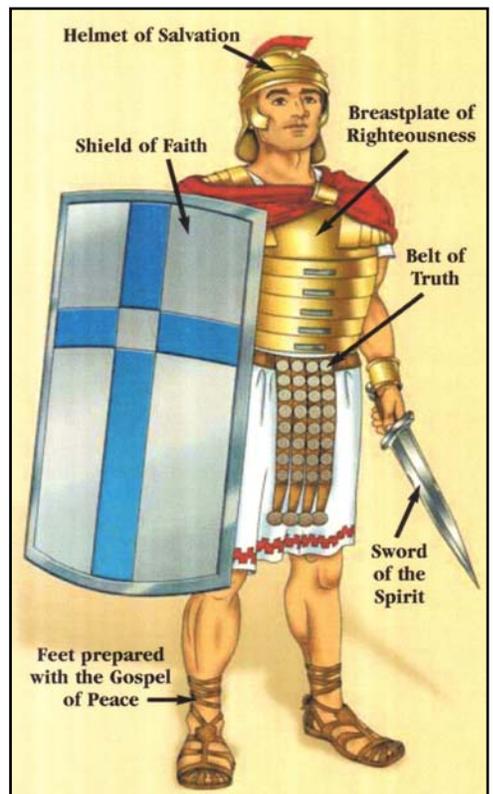
1. Align with Christ - Rom. 13:12-14

Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light... ¹⁴ [and]...clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

- A. What time is it? The beginning of a new year provides us with the reminder that time is passing.
- B. While we all hope the New Year will be better than the old year. Paul urged believers to seize every opportunity in making the New Year better in representing Jesus Christ in our world.
- C. Paul said, our “salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” Paul challenged believers to live with a sense of urgency because the night is nearly over, and the daylight is near.
 - i. The night, Paul refers to is the sinful nature in us that will still cause us problems, so he pressed believers to stay awake.
 - ii. The daylight referred to the coming righteous age for Christians, when we take our stand for Jesus.
- D. The critical nature of this hour screams for Christians to be wide-awake and ready for action. Staying in bed spiritually will lead to a state of spiritual lethargy where we might tolerate sinful attitudes and actions which can lead to a spiritual coma, rendering us unresponsive to Christ and useless in His service.
- E. Paul issues three appeals for Christian conduct.
 - i. Paul says let us discard the deeds of darkness and put the armor of light, in other words put off vices and put on virtues. Believers need to shed their bedclothes—the deeds of darkness—and put on - the armor of light - equipment suitable as soldiers of Christ.

- ii. What is this armor of light? In Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul describes the Christian's spiritual armor – see picture to the right.
- Helmet of Salvation;
 - Breastplate of Righteousness;
 - Shield of Faith;
 - Belt of Truth;
 - Feet prepared with the Gospel of Peace;
 - Sword of the Spirit;
- iii. Essentially, Paul says, we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. To put on Jesus means that we adorn ourselves with the characteristics and attributes of Jesus. We are to be little “Christs” in our world.



Christ – Your Spiritual Compass

Thinking of Christ as our spiritual magnetic north, which of the following best describes how well you have aligned the compass of your life with Christ?

- As true north as possible;
- A few degrees off north, but in the same general direction;
- What's north?

2. Avoid the Harmful - Proverbs 23:20-21

Proverbs 23:20-21

²⁰ Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on [food], ²¹ for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

- A. This section of Proverbs is often called “Words of the Wise.”
- B. Proverbs 23 contains the most vivid description of the tragic consequences of drunkenness you will find in the Bible.
- C. While this passage does not explicitly prohibit the use of alcohol, nevertheless it does imply that we must be “responsible” while drinking.
- D. It also says we must not gorge ourselves in other words “over-eat.” We can harm our bodies by ex-

cessive eating.

- E. This is not multiply choice: Solomon coupled the drunkenness and the gluttony together, because he was portraying a general lack of self-control in life.
- F. For you and I, who represent Jesus Christ, we need to ask how we are doing in caring for our bodies?

3. Adopt the Beneficial - Dan. 1:8,11-16

Daniel 1:8-20

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.... ¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel... ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.... ¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to [them]... ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

- A. Daniel was taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel, along with a number of other Hebrew youths whose names are difficult to pronounce, [Hananiah [HAN uh NIGH uh], Mishael [MISH eh uhl], Azariah [az uh RIGH uh] came to Babylon as part of the first wave of captives. Ripped from their native land, they would never see their homeland again.
- B. Have you made any resolutions this New Year, regarding diet, exercise, and overall health. I have decided to begin exercising and eating more healthy. I want to improve my personal health so I can be more effectiveness in serving Jesus.
- C. For Daniel, eating certain foods would bring defilement on him. For good Jews, there were dietary restrictions that God had given to keep His people healthy and well. Eating these foods, the Jews felt was disobeying God.
- D. Do you think Daniel should have been more cooperative? The king could have viewed this as an insult or straight-out insubordination. However, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not compromise on the issue of keeping himself free from defilement.
- E. Daniel respectfully asked permission from the chief official for a substitute diet and suggested a test. Let him and his three friends eat vegetables and water to drink. The word translated vegetables included anything grown from seed—fruits, grains, bread not just what we know as vegetables.
- F. The guard agreed to this 10 day test.
- G. In only 10 days they looked better and healthier than those following the king's prescribed diet. Daniel's proposal preserved the purity of these four Jews, and benefitted their superiors. This was a win-win situation.
- H. The food we eat has a significant effect on our physical and intellectual well-being. Avoiding excesses of food, particularly rich foods, will help us maintain the best physical health. We should not conclude that eating meat is inherently evil.
- I. Daniel sought to exclude meat because of Jewish dietary law regarding eating pork and perhaps the

meat's prior sacrifice to the Babylonian gods.

- J. God blessed Daniel's obedience and He promises to bless us too when we take a stand for God.
- K. WORD of WARNING: These are always **personal commitments** we make to God and NOT something we can prescribe for someone else.

Adopt a Beneficial Life Style

As the New Year is upon us, what can we do to care for our bodies? How can we take "care for our bodies in order to bring honor to Christ and to serve Him more faithfully?"

Biblical Truths from This Lesson in Focus

1. Take a stand to model a healthy lifestyles that honor Christ.
2. Strive to live in a manner befitting our high station in life—as followers of God.
3. The inability to curb our physical appetites can creep into all areas of life.
4. We can encourage one another to see that healthy eating and exercise not only provides personal benefits but can also increase our effectiveness in serving Christ.
5. Avoiding excesses of food, particularly rich foods, can help us maintain the best possible physical health.