**Physical Development**

Luke 2:52 tells us that young Jesus “kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” This is an excellent reminder of the intellectual, physical, spiritual and social development that every child should achieve in order to become a well rounded adult. Today we want to consider physical growth.

Many in our society are destroying their health by making bad choices in their daily lives. It is our job to raise our children to have enough respect for the bodies God has entrusted to them to take proper care of them. In fact, when we consider that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), we should be treating them with honor and respect, not neglect and abuse.

You are what you eat**.** Perhaps the biggest problem Americans have is not so much ***what*** they put in their mouths, but ***how much***. Obesity is a national epidemic in this country, largely because we exercise very little self-control. Of course there are those who have physical conditions that cause weight gain through no fault of their own, but many others are literally eating themselves to death. We should teach our kids that moderation is a virtue in most areas of life and diet is no exception. A little self-control goes a long way.

No pain, no gain. Paul admitted that physical exercise is of value (1 Timothy 4:8). In fact, the Greek word translated exercise is *gumnasia****.*** Look familiar? Although the scriptures place greater emphasis on the importance of exercising ourselves for the purpose of godliness (v.7), an active lifestyle will go a long way toward staying healthy.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. In spite of our best efforts to eat right and take care of ourselves, things go wrong that may require some professional help. Notwithstanding those with religious objections to seeking medical attention, the scriptures clearly condone the practice of medicine. Jesus indicated that there are those who need physicians (Matthew 9:12) and Paul referred to Luke as the “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). Paul even instructed young Timothy to “take a little wine for your stomach’s sake” (1 Timothy 5:23). If our children need medical attention and we deny them access to the benefit of the knowledge and technology God has granted us, we have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers (1 Timothy 5:8).

Drugs and Alcohol. The Bible does have a lot to say about drug abuse, although the drug of choice then was alcohol. In Proverbs 23, the wise man emphasized that recreational drugs should be avoided for two reasons: 1) Folks under the influence make really, *really* bad choices, and 2) drug abuse can lead to serious injury and even death. Drug and alcohol addiction ruins lives more utterly and completely than anything else and our children deserve to have the facts about their devastating effects.

We need to help our kids understand that eating right, exercising, appropriate healthcare and avoiding recreational drugs (legal and illegal) will greatly increase their chances of living healthy, happy, full lives. “I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” (Romans 12:1)

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