

Healthy living
July 19, 2009
1 John 5: 1-5
Rev. Paul Nulton

Tis the season for healthy, home grown vegetables and fruit. It's a wonderful time of the year for those of us who like to eat.

Tis a good time of the year to make a healthy life other ways, too.
Tis a good time of year for healthy living.

So I've printed in the bulletin some actions of healthy living.

The most important thing is a commitment to Christ. It effects all the others.

Get spiritual nourishment through prayer, Bible Study, worship and service
Choose your beliefs through scripture, tradition, reason, experience. Not just one.
Build healthy relationships: intimacy, faithfulness, mutual support
Love self, God and others "Love God with heart and soul and mind and strength
and neighbor as yourself"

I've given a sermon about the importance of arranging events in the proper order:

Education

Make a living: a place to live, food, shelter, transportation, clothes

Marry

Make a child or children

The news this week showed us the report of a study that shows people who do these out of order are more likely to get divorced.

Manage stress

Get proper rest, recreation, nutrition, exercise

Spend less than you make

Provide service in job and career. If your reason for work is not just to make money, but to add to the lives of others in your job, you are going to have a satisfying job.

Stay informed about social issues and vote. We heard a sermon about that last fall.

Protect and support children by watching out for child abuse. We do it by supporting kids in Sunday School and youth group.

Appreciate and learn from those who are different (diversity). Our youth did just that on the mission trip in Chicago last week. You can see their pictures on the youth bulletin board.

Community service – scouts, service clubs, organizing cookie days or ripon fest or dickens of a Christmas. You could enter the Cookie days cookie baking contest for \$25. We do community service because people need to feel connected to each other, not lonely off by themselves.

Support friends and neighbors as we do in prayers, giving rides, visiting those who cannot get out.

Work for peace

We do this by undoing the need for war between countries. We also do this by making peace between people. The Wed. night group is discussing the book, “Same Kind of Different as Me” where a homeless man and a successful businessman become friends because of faith in Christ. Ephesians 2: 14 says “He is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” Work for peace.

Persevere with courage in whatever task you do

Abstain from smoking

Abstain from gambling

Abstain from gossip and judgments of others

Kill grudges

Stay away from alcohol and other recreational drugs.

Forgive failures in self and others when you and they don't do the right thing.

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you”

The most important thing is a commitment to Christ. It effects all the others.

When we have accepted Christ as savior and Lord, we have the tools for healthy living.

How faith in Christ helps us with each of these:

We can manage stress by taking Jesus up on his offer “come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest”.

We can spend less than we make by getting our love for free from Jesus rather than needing to buy things to impress people.

We can avoid judging others unfairly by following Jesus' command to go to the one with whom we have a grievance rather than to someone else.

You see, our faith in Christ is what gives us the way to do these healthy living actions. If we try to do them without Christ, we run out of steam. We don't have the spiritual energy to do them without Christ.

Faith gives us the way to admit, confess, and repent when we come to our senses. It tells us our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is God's, not ours. It gives hope for a different way to do next time, when our way didn't work. Your connection to Jesus gives a vision of God's plan for the world by which to judge culture.

Jesus is the compassionate and caring friend who knows grief, sorrow, disappointment. Go to him with these.

Why should I accept Christ?

The Bible writers tell us that people who met Jesus for the first time could tell he was different than anybody else. He could see inside them and understand what they were like. That happened with Nathaniel. He could touch their bodies and remove their sickness. He could inspire them to leave their jobs and use their talents for a much higher purpose. He could tell a woman he had just met that she had had five husbands. He could forgive a paralyzed man and make him walk. He could stop a storm. He could stop cheaters and forgive those who killed him. He could feed the hungry. He could avoid the trap of political power. He could make common people uncommon.

Our Wednesday night study group studied John Wesley's Three Simple Rules for Christian living. Avoid evil, do good, and stay in love with God.

Do good, he says. Do good to God, to ourselves and to others. And we do good to ourselves by these healthy habits. Why do we good to ourselves?

One reason is to build a prosperous and healthy life. If we do these things, we are more likely to make a decent living than if we don't. If we stay away from things that could become addictive, we are more likely to have stable friends than if we don't. If we manage our money carefully, we are more likely to keep a job, to keep a spouse, to keep the respect of ourselves and others, than if we don't. Building prosperous and healthy life is one good reason.

I can think of a better reason. To honor God.

You see, when we do the things that honor God, we also make our own life better. Honoring God puts us into a place where we can prosper, where we can enjoy life. It is not certain, but likely. Some people live a righteous life and still live in poverty or sickness. It's not a guarantee, but a probability.

Proverbs says: "Raise a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." That's a probability, not a guarantee. Sometimes a child does depart from it.

But we do the healthy living actions whether or not they will benefit us. We are faithful whether or not life works out well. We do healthy living because we honor God by our obedience. It shows God's love to others and moves God's plan into the world. And as a side effect, when we do the things that honor God with our time, our money, our habits, our bodies, we also make our own life better.

Healthy living on our own power doesn't work. It requires faith in Jesus Christ. Part of the high school youth mission trip experience in Chicago was seeing need beyond our ability to meet. So why do we try? Why do healthy living in unhealthy surroundings?

The last night we were there, the staff washed the feet of the adult church leaders. The leaders washed the feet of the youth. The feel of water and hands on feet answered that question. Why serve? Because of the God we have. We honor a Jesus who washes feet.

We do the things that make a healthy life to give back to Jesus who loved us first, who washed us first, who died for us first. And we do the things that make a healthy life only through the Holy Spirit power of that Jesus.

3 John 11:b Those who do good prove that they are God's children.
Enjoy those healthy vegetables this week.