

Faith for Life: 60s
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Like last week with the 50s, I had to do a little research about the 60s. One of the things that stood out to me in my reading and interviews was how many times the concern for physical health kept popping up for those in their 60s. Over and over again, health was a focal point of concern. In December my wonderful mother will turn 69 years old; she's almost done with her 60s. So, I asked her, "What's stood out? What have you thought a lot about in your 60s?" The first thing she said to me was, "Well, Brian, I've spent a lot of time in my 60s thinking about my health."

The odds of facing some fairly major health concerns in our 60s is pretty high. Some of these concerns are arthritis, heart disease, osteoporosis, some form of cancer, respiratory diseases, and the list keeps going. Most of these health scares in our 60s are life-changing. Some are terminal, waking us up to the reality of mortality in ways we've never really thought about it before. Some are chronic causing us to alter the way we live our lives and making us cope with ongoing pain and discomfort. But with them both come anxiety and fear, which can lead to depression and despair.

Some are spared major health scares in their 60s. Praise God for that. Research has shown that for many the 60s are a really happy time of life. Some of our most helpful and reliable servants here at FBC are in or around this decade. They still have the energy, the drive, the strength to be very effective for the kingdom purposes of God, and due to thoughtful planning and wise savings, they are using their retirement years to maximize their service to the people of God for the glory of God. I would even say this: while it is certainly the case that the church of Jesus Christ needs people from every generation or decade and we all bring necessary gifts and abilities and perspectives to the table to make the body of Christ function, you 60 year olds, you 70 year olds who still have good health, who aren't battling significant personal health challenges provide a unique service to FBC that nobody else can. Our 20 year olds, 30, 40, and 50 year olds don't have the ability, the freedom, to serve the body of Christ like you. They are busy making a living; they are busy raising a family. They don't have a lot of savings yet. Many things here at FBC would be left undone if it were not for the faithfulness of those of you in and around your 60s... thank you.

Our question this morning is *How long can I keep going?* How long will I have the strength, the ability, the health to keep working and serving others? Will my body give out sooner than I hope? And even, how do I cope with some of these major illness, disease, or conditions that strike so many in their 60s? And I want to examine this question with a particular focus on our bodies; our physical and mental health. While it may be the case that those in their 60s think about these things more so than others, this certainly applies to all of us. Even at 41 I'm beginning to see that I can't eat like a teenager anymore (in fact, that's been true for 20 years now), but I'm beginning to truly see that it's going to catch up with me soon. We always

have to begin with right thinking, right belief before we can move to right action, so let's look at what God says about our body.

Our key passage today in 1 Cor. 6:12ff. Before we read these verses, let me give you some preliminary remarks. The first thing to say is that Paul is addressing a particular concern of sexual immorality in the Corinthian church. That's not our focus. Our passage may trigger some questions about this or that, but we'll save that for another sermon. I want to read for you the entire passage so you don't miss the deeper theological point, but we're not going to spend any time on the sexual immorality part this morning.

What is relevant is the stinkin' thinkin' the Corinthians had about their bodies. The Corinthians had what might be called an overly spiritual view of the body. What I mean by that is they looked at their actual body and didn't think it was very significant. "God is Spirit," they thought, "so who cares what happens to our bodies?" They thought their physical bodies were inconsequential. Who cares if you eat too much and are gluttonous? Why is it a big deal who you sleep with? It's just your body and our bodies aren't significant in light of the spiritual reality.

The problem, of course, with the Corinthians thinking (and if their thinking was bad their actions were bad, too) was that we live our spiritual lives in relationship to God and to one another *in these bodies!* It's in these bodies, these real, physical bodies of flesh and blood, that we love our neighbor, that we trust Jesus, that we serve in the body of Christ, that we hear the word of truth, that we remain and practice faithful relations with our spouses. Everything I just said is spiritually significant and requires the proper use of our bodies. We can't live spiritually faithful to God at all without these bodies. So, with these two things in mind, let's read our passage, 1 Cor. 6:12ff (READ).

You can see the Corinthians permissive and misguided ideas in the opening verses. "It's all good; It doesn't matter what we do with our bodies." That was the underlying beliefs in these mottos they were stating and believing. The first key statement in this passage is the second half of vs. 13 where Paul says, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

The first thing you should see is how Paul says the body (your body, my body) is for the Lord. That's the purpose of our bodies. God gives us bodies to use for him. That's what our bodies are for. Our bodies aren't given to us for us. We don't have bodies to do whatever we want with them; they are not for us, but for him. When our bodies are young, healthy, and strong they are for him. When they are older and weaker they are still for him.

Might that help you as you look at your tiring, weaker, and maybe sick body? I'm wondering: are you tempted to question God, doubt God, maybe even curse God for a body that is giving you more difficulty than you feel you can handle? Do you look at your feet that now ache, eyes that are dimmer, ears that don't hear so well, an immune system that doesn't fight off disease so easily and take it personal? God, why? Where are you? Why do I have to go

through this? Your body is always for the Lord. You belong to him. If he keeps you healthy, it's for him. If he permits you being sick, it's for him and he's got good purposes in mind for you.

Our bodies are always two things at the same time. On the one hand, our bodies are temptations to us. In our health and wellness, our bodies are a temptation to be proud and to ignore God. We don't really feel like we need God when we feel strong. We feel we can take on any challenge ourselves; we feel like we can endure hardships ourselves. We've got this strong, able body; why do I need the Lord? And in weakness, in sickness, we're tempted to curse God. Where are you, God? Why won't you come and help? Why did you take away my strength? If you won't come and help, what good are you? Our bodies are a temptation.

But they are also an opportunity. In our youth, in our strength, our bodies present to us a unique opportunity to honor the Lord through service. We can give it our all; we can be efficient and effective in many areas of service. We can go through a sleepless night at the Jr. high lock-in serving those 13 and 14 year old kids. We can keep up with those toddlers. We can work all day splitting wood for someone who needs the assistance. We have many wonderful opportunities to serve God with a healthy body. But God also gives to us opportunities to honor him with weak bodies, too. We can magnify the Lord in our weak bodies by relying on him. We have an opportunity to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We can demonstrate that God is our greatest treasure by loving him and remaining devoted to him even though he hasn't granted to us the physical strength and health we want. When we love God even in weakness and sickness we are saying, "God is our greatest treasure, not my physical strength and ability." What a great opportunity to serve God. Our bodies are for the Lord at all times and in every condition.

The second important message we see in vs. 13 is that the Lord is for the body. Do you see that there at the very end of vs. 13? *And the Lord for the body*. That's good news, isn't it? The Lord is for your body. He's for you. Can anyone doubt that? If you're currently struggling or fearful you very much could doubt that. But look at it from another perspective.

Has there ever been a time in all of history when there has been so many resources, medicines, treatment, and knowledge to help us maintain and regain health? I know there are conditions, maladies that strike fear in our hearts. The word *cancer* does that for many of us. I know it does for my family; our world started spinning when my father was told that he had cancer. And throw in with cancer the myriad of other conditions that are terrifying. Parkinsons. MS. Heart disease. You name it. But consider all of the resources, all of the advancements in modern medicine, in medical technology and equipment that can bring healing to your body; that can compensate for weaknesses and incapacities. Diseases that were death sentences just a few short decades ago can now be treated with a great deal of effectiveness. Modern medicine and treatment is so utterly amazing in helping and aiding us when our bodies do grow weak or sick. Now, that doesn't mean it's always a walk in the park; no, treatment is often painful and grueling. But there is literally new hope with almost every condition on a yearly basis.

That's the goodness of God, is it not? And along with these external resources, even more so is our internal one - our immune system. Nothing is better for our health than our own, personal immune system that God has given to us. And when we keep our immune system a fine, oiled, machine with healthy living, eating, and maintenance, it's a tremendous gift of God to keep us healthy. The Lord is indeed for our bodies.

Jump towards the end of this passage and look at vs. 19-20 (READ). Paul is basically affirming things he's already said. He says, "you are not your own." That sounds a lot like, "your body is for the Lord." We ought not to think of ourselves or our bodies as ours alone. No, our bodies belong to the Lord. In fact, in Christ, he has bought us at a price. Our bodies are the Lord's!

So, with this theological foundation, let me suggest a couple of things to you in relation to our specific question, *How long can I keep going?* I think that question implies something. I think it implies that you've adopted the God's purpose in your life. Keep going? Keep going towards what? Towards the goal. To know God. To love him. To love his people and accomplish his work. So, keep being on mission, my friends.

I said in my sermon to those in their 30s a few week ago that the 30s might just be the time you need to include rest and sabbath the most. Well, if there's a rival to the 30s it's the 60s precisely because of the changes going on with our health and body. In our 50s and even 40s we might see signs of fatigue or some wear and tear, but it's getting more obvious now. So, here's the thing: you need to start adjusting the balance between work and rest. Keep working (you can't stop doing that), but you might need to dial back the amount of work or the kind of work you do so you can increase your care of your body. This is simply what good stewardship looks like.

Now, here's what I'm guessing: for many of you you hate having to even think about that. Needing to adjust is just a reminder that God is changing your life in unwelcome ways. I get that. I curse tendonitis in my foot or a slower metabolism, but those are small in the grand scheme of things. I'm actually afraid of what my attitude, what my heart will be like if and when I've got something really big to deal with (I'm so in love with this present world. I think God actually uses our slowing, aching body to remind us that this is not our home; we're just passing through). Trust God's sovereignty in this and submit to the transforming strategy of God. Don't curse God and his sovereignty by turning into a grumpy old man or a bitter old woman. Really, model for your little brothers and sisters in Christ what it looks like to graciously receive God's increased limitations on your bodies so that your souls shine the light of Christ more brightly. Adjust your balance between work and rest.

The second word of encouragement I have for you comes from a passage later in 1 Corinthians; 9:24-27 reads this way (READ). Paul wanted to win the prize. He wanted to receive God's reward. So, notice what he needs to do: in vs. 27 he says, "I discipline my body and keep

it under control.” Paul recognized that while his battle was against the rulers, powers, and authorities of the realm of darkness, the battle ground was located in his own body; the spiritual battle happened here. So, what did he do? He practiced rigorous discipline of his body to keep it under control. A spiritual exercise taking place in his body.

We all need to do that. If you are young and your bodily desires are growing and surging you need to exercise some discipline of your body so that your heart isn't taken captive by the idols of pleasure or comfort. If you are older, out of weariness and fatigue, your body might be begging you to give up the fight of faith and give in to self-pity, to grumpiness and complaining. To win the battle against our flesh, we all have to discipline our bodies accordingly. And if I might say, that might just be the biggest battle and challenge of all. But with God's help, we can do it.

If you are in your 60s, I really believe you have some very fruitful years ahead of you for the kingdom purposes of God. So, make the adjustments that are necessary so you can live the full life of service until you finish the race.

Key Vs. 1 Cor. 6:13

Questions for the week

- What was some good news you heard today from God's word?
- Do you think you are ready to make the adjustments when your body and health change? Why or why not?
- What might you be afraid of when you think about dealing with health concerns?