

YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD

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Who are we? We are children of God. Our potential is unlimited. Our inheritance is sacred.



Your body is a magnificent creation of God. Consider the heart—it is an incredible pump. It has four delicate valves that open and close more than 100,000 times a day, directing the flow of blood.

Recently I observed young men who attracted attention to themselves because of their extreme styles of dress and grooming. One made a revealing remark when he said, “I’m trying to find out who I really am.” This occurred after I had come from a Church meeting where Primary children had sung “I Am a Child of God” (*Hymns*, no. 301). Such contrasting experiences emphasize the importance of knowing that we are literally children of God.

We are dual beings. Each soul is comprised of body and spirit, (see D&C 88:15), both of which emanate from God. A firm understanding of body and spirit will shape our thoughts and deeds for good.

The Body

The marvel of our physical bodies is often overlooked. Who has not encountered feelings of low self-esteem because of physique or appearance? Many people wish their bodies could be more to their liking. Some with naturally straight hair want it curly. Others with curly hair want it straight. Occasionally some ladies, believing that “gentlemen prefer blondes,” become

“decided blondes.”

Your body, whatever its natural gifts, is a magnificent creation of God. It is a tabernacle of flesh—a temple for your spirit. A study of your body attests to its divine design.

Its formation begins with the union of two reproductive cells—one from the mother and one from the father. Together, these two cells contain all of the new individual’s hereditary information, stored in a space so small it cannot be seen by the naked eye. Twenty-three chromosomes from each parent unite in one new cell. These chromosomes contain thousands of genes which determine all of the physical characteristics of the unborn person. Approximately 22 days after these two cells unite, a little heart begins to beat. At 26 days, blood begins to circulate. Cells multiply and divide. Some become eyes that see; others become ears that hear.

Each organ is a wondrous gift from God. The eye has a self-focusing lens. Nerves and muscles control two separate eyes to make a single three-dimensional image. The eyes are connected to the brain, which records



the sights seen. No cords or batteries are needed.

Each ear is connected to compact equipment designed to convert sound waves into audible tones. An eardrum serves as a diaphragm. Minute ossicles amplify sound vibrations and transmit a signal via nerves to the brain, which senses and remembers the sounds.

The heart is an incredible pump. It has four delicate valves that control the direction of blood flow. These valves open and close more than 100,000 times a day—36 million times a year. Yet, unless altered by disease, they are able to withstand this stress almost indefinitely. No man-made material developed to date can be flexed so frequently and so long without breaking.

Much could be said about each of the other precious organs in the body. They function in a marvelous manner, beyond my time or ability to describe.

Other attributes of the body are equally amazing, though less evident. For example, backup is provided. Each paired organ has instant backup available from the other of the pair. Single organs, such as the brain, the heart, and the liver, are nourished by two routes of blood supply. This design protects the organ if harm should come to any one channel.

Think of the body's system of self-defense. To protect it from harm, the body perceives pain. In response to infection, it generates antibodies. They not only help to combat the immediate problem, but they persist to strengthen resistance to infection in the future.

One day my attention was directed to some three-year-old children who had lapped up water from a street gutter. The number of germs they ingested must have been incalculable, but not one of those youngsters became ill. As soon as that dirty drink reached each little stomach, its hydrochloric acid went to work to treat the water and protect the life of the child.

The skin provides protection. It also warns against injuries that excessive heat or cold might cause. It even sends signals that indicate trouble elsewhere. With fever, the skin perspires. When one is frightened, it pales. When one is embarrassed, it blushes.

The body repairs itself. Broken bones mend and become strong once again. Skin lacerations heal themselves. A leak in the circulation can seal itself. The body renews its own outdated cells. The average red blood cell, for instance, lives about 120 days. Then it is replaced

by a newly regenerated cell.

The body regulates its own vital ingredients. Essential elements and chemical constituents are adjusted continuously. And regardless of wide fluctuations in the temperature of the environment, the temperature of the body is carefully controlled within narrow bounds.

If these qualities of normal function, defense, repair, regeneration, and regulation were to prevail in perpetuity, life here would continue without limit. Mercifully, our Creator provided for aging and other processes which ultimately result in physical death. We often think of death as untimely or tragic. But death, like birth, is part of life. When death claims an individual in the prime of life, we take comfort in knowing that the very laws which do not allow life to persist here are the same laws that will be implemented at the time of the Resurrection, when the body will be endowed with immortality.

The Spirit

Next I speak of the spirit. Prior to our mortal existence here, each spirit son and daughter lived with God. The spirit is eternal; it existed in innocence in the premortal realm and will exist after the body dies. The spirit provides the body with animation and personality. "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure" (D&C 131:7). "The spirit of man [is] in the likeness of his person" (D&C 77:2).

Development of the spirit is of eternal consequence. The attributes by which we shall be judged one day are those of the spirit. These include the virtues of integrity, compassion, love, and more. Your spirit, by being housed in your body, is able to develop and express these attributes in ways that are vital to your eternal progression.

Spirit and body, when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. Indeed, we are children of God—physically and spiritually.

Physical Limitations

For reasons usually unknown, some people are born with physical limitations. Specific parts of the body may be abnormal. Regulatory systems may be out of balance. And all of our bodies are subject to disease and death. Nevertheless, the gift of a physical body is priceless. A perfect body is not required to achieve a divine destiny. In fact, some of the sweetest spirits are housed in frail frames. Great spiritual strength is often developed by



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No less amazing is your eternal spirit. Among its attributes are the virtues of integrity, compassion, and love. The Spirit and body when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. Indeed, we are children of God—physically and spiritually.

those with physical challenges precisely because they are challenged. Such individuals are entitled to all the blessings that God has in store for His faithful and obedient children.

Eventually the time will come when each “spirit and . . . body shall be reunited again in . . . perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame” (Alma 11:43). Then, thanks to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can become perfected in Him.

Personal Behavior

How should these truths influence our personal behavior? We should gratefully acknowledge God as our Creator. Otherwise, we would be as guilty as goldfish swimming in a bowl, oblivious to the goodness of their provider. “Ye must give thanks unto God,” said the Lord, “for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with” (D&C 46:32). And we can practice virtue and holiness before Him continually.

We will regard our body as a temple of our very own. We will not let it be des-

ecrated or defaced in any way. We will control our diet and exercise for physical fitness.

Should not equal attention be paid to spiritual fitness? Just as physical strength requires exercise, so spiritual strength requires effort. Among the most important of spiritual exercises is prayer. It engenders harmony with God and a desire to keep His commandments. Prayer is a key to wisdom, virtue, and humility.

We will be careful about which counsel we heed. Many so-called experts give advice for the body—without thought for the spirit. Anyone who accepts direction contrary to the Word of Wisdom, for example, forsakes a law revealed to bring both physical and spiritual blessings. Some recommendations regarding use of our reproductive organs are based solely—and inadequately—upon physical considerations. Beware of such one-sided views! Paul taught that “if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

That caution pertains to pornography, which is highly addictive. In time, addictions enslave both the body and the spirit. Full repentance from addiction is best accomplished in this life, while we still have a mortal body to help us.

As children of God, we should not let anything enter the body that might defile it. We will cherish our chastity and avoid “foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown [us] in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9). We will “flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness” (1 Timothy 6:11)—traits that edify the whole soul.

Who are we? We are children of God. Our potential is unlimited. Our inheritance is sacred. May we always honor that heritage—in every thought and deed. **NE**

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