

Created in His Image

Our bodies were not created to be flaunted or praised or judged on subjective standards of attractiveness. They were created that we might have eternal life.





By Aspen Stander

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In the digital age, we are bombarded by messages that our bodies are not good enough unless they are a certain size and shape. Some social media posts seem to imply that we should eat only green smoothies made with organic ingredients and run 10 miles (16 km) a day in order to achieve the “perfect” body and thus be adored by friends, family, and strangers alike.

Many of us feel ashamed about what we perceive to be imperfections in our bodies. We feel that since we can't be perfect—since we don't look like an Instagram model—we are not worthy of love and acceptance.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Our bodies are gifts from God. They were not created to be flaunted or praised or judged on subjective standards of attractiveness. They were created that we might have eternal life.

Divine Truths

In the premortal life, Heavenly Father presented His plan of salvation to the spirits in heaven. As part of His plan, we would receive a body in order to experience mortality on earth. In our physical bodies, we would use our agency to learn the gospel and receive the ordinances that would allow us to return to live with Him as resurrected beings.

So, putting the plan in motion, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). Because our Heavenly Father has a body of flesh and bone (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:22), receiving your own body allows you the potential to become more like Him. Physical bodies are not just inconvenient containers for our spirits—they are necessary for our salvation and exaltation.

We are not called to maintain a certain weight or to conform to the beauty ideals of a certain society. We are called to serve God and to become more like Jesus Christ. We are called to proclaim the gospel, to raise up righteous families unto the Lord, and to follow the covenant path to return to our Father in Heaven.

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM GETTY IMAGES

Satan's Lies

If having a body is such a great blessing, why do so many people struggle with body image or obsess over their physical appearance? Why do so many people look upon their bodies with disgust rather than with the love and care with which they were created?

Our bodies are a privilege and a gift. Perhaps one reason Satan influences us to struggle with loving or appreciating our bodies is that he doesn't have one. He rejected the plan of salvation and was cast out of heaven, never to experience the great joys or great pains of mortality. He can tempt us to think that our bodies are not good enough, that we need to go to dangerous or unhealthy extremes to meet the world's standards of "beauty." When we believe that we must be flawlessly attractive in order to be worthy of love, our outlook becomes unbalanced, and the adversary can whisper thoughts of inadequacy, worthlessness, and self-hatred into our minds.

Satan would have us forget that we are created in the image of our Heavenly Parents and that our eternal worth does not depend on what we look like. The adversary knows that fixating on our bodies is a distraction from more important matters: our standards, our relationships with other people, and our relationship with God. The adversary wants us to become so preoccupied with our looks or our

weight that we forget about the work we have been called to do to further the plan of happiness.

Endowed with Power

Our bodies are gifts from God, and they are essential as we seek to progress along the covenant path. Understanding that having a body is a privilege denied to those who chose to follow Lucifer's plan instead of following Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is incredibly empowering. We need our bodies to receive the ordinances of the temple, where we can also learn beautiful truths about the purpose and potential of our bodies. Our physical participation in priesthood ordinances is necessary to prepare us for eternal life. That's why we must perform temple work for the dead, whose spirits are currently separated from their bodies—they cannot do it themselves.

Realizing what a true privilege having a body is can minimize any insecurities you may have about your body and replace those insecurities with gratitude.

A Sweet Reunion

Someday, each of us will also die. Our bodies will be temporarily separated from our spirits until we are resurrected. When we are resurrected, every limb, joint, and hair of our physical bodies will be "restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23). I imagine this will be a sweet reunion as we touch, taste, smell, hear, and see with renewed strength and vigor. I imagine approaching my family members with outstretched arms to embrace them. I *don't* imagine worrying about the stretch marks from my last growth spurt or the extra layer of fat around my midsection. Those things will be gone. I imagine that we will



be able to see ourselves and each other in the way the Savior sees us, and in our bodies we will be reunited with God (see 2 Nephi 9:4).

Our bodies are given to us that we may fill the measure of our creation and receive a crown of glory in the presence of God the Father (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:19). This is made possible because of the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who redeems us from death and sin. If we use our bodies to perform the work that we have been called to do rather than fixating on the way our bodies look, we will be better able to reach our full potential in this life and the next. ■

TIPS FOR IMPROVING BODY IMAGE

1. **Practice gratitude.** Whenever you catch yourself talking or thinking negatively about your body, think of all the things your body allows you to do. Your arms allow you to play basketball, to embrace a friend who's having a rough day, to cradle a newborn child. Your legs give you the strength to walk, dance, run, cartwheel, and kneel in prayer. Your lungs work seamlessly to provide your cells with oxygen, expanding and contracting with every breath you take to deliver oxygen to your body. Your heart beats to sustain life, and your brain works at lightning speed to sustain consciousness. As you're thinking about the miracle of your body, what are more ways you can express that gratitude?
2. **Have compassion.** The first and second great commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself (see Matthew 22:37–39). We know we should have compassion for others, but have we truly considered what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves? It requires us to first love ourselves. Would you ever make fun of a friend or family member for being too fat, too thin, too short, or too wrinkly? Of course not! Extend the same compassion to yourself that you would to others.
3. **Take care of yourself.** Eat foods that will nourish both your mind and body and that will supply you with adequate energy each day. Exercise in a way that feels good and helps you appreciate the gift of your physical body. Find healthy ways to manage stress and make sure to take breaks to breathe and relax. And it can be difficult at times, but one of the most important ways to take care of your body is to get enough sleep!
4. **Attend the temple.** Nowhere is the importance of our physical bodies made more clear than in the ordinances of the temple. We are promised both spiritual and physical blessings as we perform these ordinances for ourselves, and we can be reminded of these blessings as we receive ordinances on behalf of those in the spirit world.



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