



By President
Russell M. Nelson

YOUR BODY: *A Magnificent Gift to Cherish*

Your body is a magnificent creation of God.

The longer I live, the more knowledge I gain. That knowledge helps me to understand that the gift of our physical bodies is a transcendent miracle. A unique body is given to each of us by our loving Heavenly Father. He created it as a tabernacle for our spirits, to assist each of us in our quest to fulfill the full measure of our creation. Our bodies allow each of us to experience the great plan of salvation that He has designed for all His precious children. He wants us eventually to become more like Him and return to live with Him. That great blessing would not be possible without our first receiving a physical body in this probationary estate.

God, the Father of our spirits,¹ has a glorified, perfected body of flesh and bones.² We lived with Him in heaven before we were born.³ When He created us physically, we were created in the image of God, each with a personal mortal body.⁴

We are part of His divine purpose. “My work and my glory,” He said, is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”⁵



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WE ARE DUAL BEINGS

Each soul is composed of body and spirit,⁶ both of which emanate from God. A firm understanding of body and spirit will shape our thoughts and deeds for the good.

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 realm⁷ and will exist after the body dies.⁸ The spirit provides the body with animation and personality.⁹ “All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure.”¹⁰

Development of the spirit is of eternal consequence. The attributes by which we shall be judged one day are those of the spirit.¹¹ These include the attributes of virtue, integrity, compassion, love, and more.¹² 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.¹³

Spirit and body, when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. “The spirit and the body are the soul of man.”¹⁴ Both are of great importance. Your physical body is a magnificent creation of God. It is His temple as well as yours



and must be treated with reverence. Scripture declares:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”¹⁵

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.

YOUR BODY IS A MAGNIFICENT GIFT

The marvel of our physical bodies is often overlooked or underappreciated. 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 born with curly hair want it straight.

Ponder the magnificence of what you see when you look in the mirror. Ignore the freckles, the unruly hair, or the blemishes, and look beyond to see the real you—a child of God, created by Him in His image.

When you sing “I Am a Child of God,”¹⁶ think of His gift to you of your own physical body. The many amazing attributes of your body attest to your own “divine nature.”¹⁷

Each organ of your body is a wondrous gift from God. Each eye has an autofocusing lens. Nerves and muscles control two eyes to make a single three-dimensional image.

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The eyes are connected to the brain, which records the sights seen.

Your heart is an incredible pump.¹⁸ 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 can withstand such stress almost indefinitely.

Think of the body's defense system. To protect it from harm, it perceives pain. In response to infection, it generates antibodies. The skin provides protection. It warns against injury that excessive heat or cold might cause.

The body renews its own outdated cells. The body can heal its cuts, bruises, and broken bones. Its capacity for reproduction is another sacred gift from God.

The body constantly regulates the levels of countless ingredients, such as salt, water, sugar, protein, oxygen, and carbon dioxide. Regulatory controls are managed without our awareness of these amazing realities.

Please note: 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

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.¹⁹

Each mortal life is closed by death. 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.”²⁰ Then, thanks to Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we can become perfected in Him.²¹ Anyone who studies the workings of the human body has surely “seen God moving in his majesty and power.”²²

OUR SPIRITS SHOULD BE IN CHARGE OF OUR BODIES

Remarkable as your body is, its prime purpose, as stated earlier, is of even greater importance—to serve as tenement for your eternal spirit.

Your spirit acquired your body and became a living soul to experience mortality and the associated trials and testing. Part of that testing is to determine if the appetites of your body can become mastered by the spirit that dwells within it.

When we understand our nature and our purpose on earth and that our bodies are physical temples of God, we will realize

that it is sacrilege to let anything enter that might defile the body. It is truly irreverent to let even the gaze of our precious eyesight or the sensors of our touch or hearing supply the brain with memories that are unclean or unworthy. We will cherish our chastity and avoid “foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown [us] in destruction and perdition.”²³ We will “flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness”²⁴—traits that edify the whole soul.

Substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and harmful drugs are forbidden by the Lord. We have similarly been warned about the evils of pornography and unclean thoughts. Appetites for these degrading forces can become addictive. In time, physical or mental addictions enslave *both* the body and the spirit. Repentance from such shackles should be accomplished in this life while we still have the aid of a mortal body to help us develop self-mastery.

Our Creator put appetites in our bodies to perpetuate the human race and fulfill His great plan of happiness. Thus, we have appetites for food, for water, and for love.

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Satan knows the power of our appetites. So, he tempts us to eat things we should not eat, to drink things we should not drink, and to desecrate the most intimate expressions of love by employing them outside the bounds of marriage.

When we truly know our divine nature, we will want to control such appetites. And we will focus our eyes on sights, our ears on sounds, and our minds on thoughts that are a credit to our physical creation as a temple of God. In daily prayer, we will gratefully acknowledge Him as our Creator and thank Him for the magnificence of our own physical temple. We will care for it and cherish it as our own personal gift from God.

FOLLOW THE SAVIOR

To reach your highest destiny, emulate the Savior. He proclaimed, “What manner of men ought ye to be? . . . Even as I am.”²⁵ Our loftiest hope is to grow in spirit and attain “the stature of the fulness of Christ.”²⁶

Remember, not a season of life passes without temptation, trial, or torment, whether spiritually or physically. But as you



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prayerfully develop self-mastery, the desires of the flesh may be subjected to your spiritual control. And when that has been achieved, you may have the strength to submit to the will of your Heavenly Father. Remember, Jesus said, "Not my will, but thine, be done."²⁷

When deepening trials come your way, as they surely will, remember this glorious promise of the Savior: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."²⁸

May we ever be grateful for the incredible blessing of a magnificent physical body, the supreme creation of our loving Heavenly Father. As great as our body is, it is not an end in itself. It is an essential part of God's great plan of happiness for our eternal progression. If we honor it as God has ordained, we will remain on that "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."²⁹



Jesus Christ is our great Exemplar. I declare, as His special witness, that He is the Son of God. He "is the life and the light of the world."³⁰

We are sons and daughters of Almighty God. He is our Father. We are His children. Our divine inheritance is the magnificence of humankind. Our inheritance is sacred. Our potential is unlimited. May we always honor His gifts and that heritage in all that we do and say. ■

NOTES

1. See Acts 17:27–29.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
3. See Jeremiah 1:4–5; Hebrews 12:9; Moses 6:51; Abraham 3:22–23.
4. See Genesis 1:27; 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:44; Moses 2:27; 3:7.
5. Moses 1:39.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:38.
8. See Alma 40:11; Abraham 3:18.
9. See Job 32:8.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 131:7.
11. The spirit, not the body, is the active, responsible component of the soul. Without the spirit, the body is dead (see James 2:26). It is the spirit, therefore, that chooses good or evil and will be held accountable for both the positive and negative attributes it possesses at the Final Judgment (see Alma 41:3–7).
12. Such as "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence" (Doctrine and Covenants 4:6).
13. See 2 Nephi 2:11–16, 21–26; Moroni 10:32–33.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
15. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; see also Doctrine and Covenants 93:35.
16. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
17. 2 Peter 1:4.
18. The heart pumps about 2,000 gallons (7,570 L) per day.
19. See Abraham 3:25–26.
20. Alma 11:43; see also Ecclesiastes 12:7; Alma 40:23; Doctrine and Covenants 138:17.
21. See Moroni 10:32.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 88:47.
23. 1 Timothy 6:9.
24. 1 Timothy 6:11. 1 Timothy 6:12 continues, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." That is our choice.
25. 3 Nephi 27:27.
26. Ephesians 4:13.
27. Luke 22:42.
28. Revelation 3:21.
29. 2 Nephi 31:18.
30. Alma 38:9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 11:28.