



5 Ways to Take Care of Yourself

Taking Care of Yourself

Before We Start:

As you read these scriptures and suggestions, find the ones that speak to you. Maybe you'll see ideas you feel you "should" do. Instead, think of ways you "prefer" to care for yourself and write them down. Choose one and make a start. See what happens in yourself and those around you.

Everyone is sooo busy, right? There aren't enough hours in a day to meet all the demands; some things are done poorly, and some not at all. The urgent overtakes the important. Stress and anxiety build. So does fatigue. We know what happens then—we say hurtful things, blame someone, or turn our backs. Maybe, we have another drink or take another look. All these choices isolate us; it's not exactly loving one another as I have loved you. Paul tells us, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live

peaceably with all." Isn't he saying we have an individual responsibility to act in ways that make that possible? How do we resist being overwhelmed and losing control?

In part, we take care of ourselves to build resilience, the ability to respond well to life's challenges, and treat others with kindness. When Jesus lived on Earth, he showed us the importance of community and time alone with our Father. He shared his joy, his tears, and his righteous anger. He took naps. He knows we need to do these things, too, if we are to love well.

So, what does taking good care of ourselves include? This guide is designed to help us identify and act on some steps to care for ourselves and love one another better.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

- Romans 12:18



Taking Care of the Body

Ever wonder why God took that seventh day off? Did He need a break? Had He grown weary? Perhaps He had us in mind when He did that and then made it a commandment. He knows we need time with Him and away from busyness—time to be refreshed, first by worshipping Him and then by enjoying His creation together. But why be refreshed?

Paul reminds us of the purpose of having a physical presence—to glorify God. A temple is treated with reverence and maintained to a high standard so that the Holy Spirit will not be hindered. We know how we behave when we grow weary; God calls us to be refreshed, and Paul reminds us why.

Application:

Make Time for You:

This Sunday, set aside time for that activity you've been wanting to do but have been too busy for: a bike ride, a picnic, or maybe just a quiet time soaking up some sunlight. Notice the energy you have afterward. And be grateful for the break.

Get Enough Sleep:

Have you heard of sleep hygiene? These practices support better sleep, resulting in more energy and better moods. For instance:

- Have a regular bedtime routine.
- Avoid heavy meals and exercise late in the evening.
- Eliminate screen-time and bright lights before bedtime.
- Keep the bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated foods, and drinks late in the day.
- Don't nap for more than 30 minutes. Try not to take your troubles to bed with you.

- Talk with someone about what's on your mind or write your thoughts in a journal.
- Employ relaxation techniques like deep breathing. If you cannot fall asleep, don't lie awake in bed; get up and try a relaxing activity like reading a book, doing a puzzle, or taking a warm bath.
- When you start the new day, get lots of sunshine; this helps keep your body clock in sync, setting you up for better sleep. Good sleep and lots of sunshine help us feel and function better.

4-7-8 Breathing:

No doubt you've heard of the fight or flight reflex—it also can cause us to freeze or faint. When we're startled, feel attacked, or maybe just feel angry, our brain kicks into self-preservation mode, impairing our ability to think our best. If the perceived threat comes from someone close or a co-worker, living peaceably suffers—if we let it. We've all heard the advice to count to ten before saying anything. Relaxation techniques, and deep breathing, for example, reverse the physical effects of fight or flight, giving our thinking brain time to come back online. Our word choices soften, and asking questions begins. Deep breathing has various patterns, but the basics and the results are the same. Here's one to try, called 4-7-8 breathing.

1. **Close your mouth and quietly inhale** through your nose to a mental count of four.
2. **Hold your breath** for a count of seven.
3. **Exhale through your mouth**, making a whoosh sound for a count of eight.
4. **Repeat the process** three more times for a total of four breath cycles.

Other techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation or use visual imagery by closing your eyes and imaging being in a place that feels safe or calm, have similar results, enabling us to calm our bodies and connect peaceably with others.

And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that he had done.

- *Genesis 2:2*

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.

- *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

Taking Care of Thoughts & Emotions

Our Father allows us to choose what we believe is the foundation of our life. Our beliefs about Him, ourselves, and the world direct our feelings and behaviors. If our beliefs align with all the world tells us, the mental and emotional tolls will be high. Getting free of old ways of thinking takes effort and faith. But once our mind changes, everything changes. Paul encourages us to renew our thoughts and actions in a Godly direction, with the promise that His peace will overtake us, guarding our hearts and minds.

Application:

Take note of the praiseworthy things and people around you and write them down. Tell three people what you see in them that is commendable. Notice the peace you feel as you follow Paul's instructions.

Paul tells us that we can be transformed by **taking care of our thoughts and emotions**. Transformation certainly sounds like a positive thing. Here are some more ideas that support new thoughts and emotions.

We all feel stressed at times. But why is it that a situation that strains you is no big deal to me? Maybe it's the different thoughts we apply as we try to make sense of things. When we apply inaccurate beliefs or assumptions, the result can be troubled feelings and inappropriate behaviors. These inaccurate ideas are called cognitive distortions and are unhelpful thinking habits.

Let's say someone is called to their boss's office. Immediately, they might believe they know what the boss is thinking (mind-reading) and assume they're going to lose their job (catastrophizing); their stress level

goes way high, and maybe they disrespect their boss. What if the meeting was meant to offer a promotion?

So far as it depends on us when stress arises, we need to evaluate our thoughts for such distortions. (There are lots of them!) There is a way to 'reframe' the situation. Setting aside faulty assumptions and asking questions will reduce stress and lead to unity with others. Renewal of the mind requires awareness of our distorted thoughts. Transformation means living free of them.

Who are you, really? Jesus tells us that a house built on sand will fall, but one built on the rock will withstand rain, floods, and wind. Can't the same be said of us?

As we grow up, the world gives many messages about our failings and flaws. Sadly, we take those messages in, and they become our identity, an identity built on sand; the results are predictable: depression, isolation, and lack of purpose. Here's the truth: your identity was decided by Jesus. In John 15, He says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." Elsewhere, we read that we were bought with a price, are new creations, and are seated with Him in heavenly places. Over and over, Paul reminds us of our identity in Christ. In Him, our identity is rock-solid. In Him, we guard our hearts and minds. Living peaceably starts with knowing who we are and Whose we are.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- *Romans 12: 2*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- *Philippians 4:6-9*



Taking Care of Connections

As believers in Christ, we have a personal relationship with Him. He says He has chosen us and calls us friends. Abiding in Him means that we depend upon Him always, growing in righteousness, joining His work, and seeking a deepening connection; not abiding in Him defines futility and isolation. The Father made us for connection with Him and with one another. Solomon understood the human need for connection. He saw how we support and encourage each other, picking each other up and standing together. He saw how one alone is in trouble.

Application:

If you find yourself arguing with someone, S.T.O.P. This means:

- **Stop** talking.
- **Take** a few deep breaths.
- **Observe** what's happening in yourself and them.
- **Proceed**, but only when you have calmed down. Maybe that means stepping away for a time, perhaps after you've gotten some rest.

In the garden of Eden, God saw that it was not good for a man to be alone and would need help in this life. Solomon, too, recognized the need for support from others; Jesus sent his followers out in twos. In our time, the Christian writer John Eldredge says a man alone will be taken out. What can we do to **take care of connections**?

Jesus has much to say about being connected to others:

- **Love** your neighbor as you love yourself
- **Give** to the one who begs of you
- **Pray** for those who persecute you
- **Forgive** seventy times seven

He calls us to be soft-hearted and generous, forgiving failure in others just as we forgive it in ourselves. Paul wrote that love keeps no account and does not rejoice in wrongdoing. Too often, we keep score, seeking superiority. We choose to be "right" instead of being connected. We turn away from the other and from the lesson. This seems to work for a while; things simmer down, and life continues. But over time, the relationship is destroyed. The better choice is to turn toward others into the hurtful communication. Taking the time and asking questions allows emotions to calm and answers to be found. We focus on the problem while giving grace to one another.

Jesus also said, "So then, if you are presenting a gift before the altar and suddenly you remember a quarrel you have with a fellow believer, leave your gift there in front of the altar and go at once to apologize to the one who is offended.

Then, after you have reconciled, come to the altar and present your gift." It appears that to Jesus, living peaceably with others comes before making an offering. He knows that an apology is a powerful tool for reconciliation. What does a sincere apology look like? We say we regret our actions and acknowledge the hurt we have inflicted on them. We accept responsibility without justification or assigning blame. We offer restitution and demonstrate a genuine desire to go another way. And we ask for forgiveness. Our sincere apology says we know our wrong choices have injured them, and our will is to stop doing that. If we deny responsibility, how are they to feel safe with us? Without safety, connections are damaged and then ruined. So, ask yourself, why is this so hard to do? What is the cost of failure to do it? Is that a price worth paying? Which way is peaceable?

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- *John 5: 15*

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

- *Ecclesiastes 4: 9- 12*

Taking Care of the Soul

Jesus was a busy man with little time to complete His work on Earth—consider His course through the book of Luke. How did He stay on track?

He made time for what He needed most—the Father. We read that He withdrew to lonely places and prayed. He told His disciples that driving a demon out of a young boy required prayer and fasting. He spent forty days alone in the desert. But He was not alone; He was with the Father, seeking His will, gaining strength. Some might say that when He was challenged, He was “prayed up,” ready for anything.

We can be “prayed up,” too. Soul care takes many forms, some done alone with the Father, some in the community. Paul reminds us to be filled with the Spirit, joyful and grateful, sharing worship together.

Application:

This week, thank God for everything He has done for you, right down to the breath that fills your lungs. Make a list and share it with someone close to you. On Sunday, join others in worship, using that breath to sing joyful songs to Him.

What does it mean to **take care of the soul**? Is it enough just to be saved, like having life insurance? Is there something more to soul care? Jesus talked about ‘abiding’ in His love and the Father’s love. Some say this means to remain or stay in Him, to be in communion with Him. Indeed, Jesus says, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing.” Caring for the soul takes many forms. Consider these:

Through Jesus’s practices and the teachings of others, we see examples of soul care and feeding. Jesus showed His followers how to pray and how to fast. He kept Sabbath. He studied and shared the holy texts

available then. He spent time alone with the Father, saying He abided in Him. He spent time with His family and His friends. He gave glory to God. He went about doing good. He said His food was to do the will of the One who sent Him.

Similarly, In Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis wrote, “God designed the human machine to run on Himself . . . the fuel our spirits were designed to burn . . . There is no other.”

One more recent resource says abiding in Him means walking by faith, spending focused time, and engaging in intentional actions.

Another suggests ‘chair time,’ literally being seated for a time every day, present and available to hear from Jesus. This is not a list of things to do; rather, these steps enact loving Him with all our soul.

Here are some other ideas for caring for the soul:

- **Spend time** in nature, appreciating the wonder of God’s creation.
- **Engage** in a cause that matters to you.
- **Practice** random acts of kindness.
- **Set aside time** for reflection; maybe start a journal.
- Busyness is soul-crushing; **carve out some margin** for the things that matter most.
- **Be grateful** for all God is doing in your life.

Yet the news about Him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

– *Luke 5:15-16*

. . . be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

– *Ephesians 5:18-20*

Taking Care of Work

From the days of Adam, God has given us work to do and resources to steward; these are His provision for us. We can trust Him for it. And since He is the source, we honor Him by working with diligence and integrity, growing in skill, and taking care with co-workers. But like every good thing He gives us, we can make an idol of work. It can become our identity and our salvation. His commandment to keep Sabbath holy calls attention to our dependence on Him.

Application:

Consider all the things that fill your cup and set a time to do one of them this week. Perhaps it's gardening, visiting old friends, or volunteering. Perhaps it's something you'll be doing in heaven. Sabbath can break out any time you let go of busyness and depend on God for what you need. All we have He gives us—work and time off. Make both an offering.

Before the fall in Eden, everything needed was readily at hand. God placed Adam in a paradise “to work it and keep it.” Nothing too strenuous, naming animals and pruning trees, perhaps. But after the fall, work changed; the ground became cursed, and pain and sweat would be the cost of keeping fed. Often, our work feels like drudgery, where we are only working to get by. **Taking care of work**, so far as it depends on us, may require a shift in thinking and some new practices so that we might live peaceably with our co-workers.

Paul had a day job; he was a tentmaker. He valued labor in part because it allowed generosity. He disdained laziness, saying those who refuse work shouldn't eat. But more than these things, he made tents with all his heart “as working for the Lord.” He must have been great to work with. His tents must have been special. Surely, he had peace with the other tentmakers and his customers. He said it was Christ we serve in the workplace.

Paul saw God's provision of work as an opportunity for service and generosity. How can we see work in this way, not as toil to pay for everything we “need”? Maybe it starts with thanking God for our daily bread and seeing His kingdom first in the middle of work. We can list all the ways His provision has blessed our families and how it blesses others through us. We can pray for employers and co-workers, and customers. We can thank Him for shoes on our feet and enough gas in the tank. When we work for Jesus, work is renewed and transformed even (Thanks to Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*, 2006).

Here are some other ways to take care of work:

- **Improve** your skills,
- **Learn** to say no,
- **Connect** with co-workers,
- **Take breaks** and take time off,
- **Try** a new role,
- **See** to the needs of others,
- **Explore** interests outside of work.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work . . .

- *Exodus 20:8*

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

- *Colossians 3:23*

NEW SERIES



[Plan Your Visit](#)

Gather with us this April for our new series, Through the Valley. This series will touch on something especially important to us, mental health. The state of Kansas ranks low for mental health resources and we want to be part of the solution.

Your healing journey starts with awareness and knowing that you're not alone. Join us as we walk through the valley together and discover what the Gospel has to say about our mental health.

APRIL 16 - MAY 28

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