

The Importance of a Physical Body

A Compilation of Quotes



1. "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine's body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. ...
2. "The devil has no power over us only as we permit him; the moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power."
3. (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 211, 214.)
4. "Satan does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary's eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a tabernacle of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He cannot marry or enjoy the blessings of procreation and family life. He cannot abide the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word damned is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father...
5. "I raise an apostolic voice of warning about the potentially stifling, suffocating, suppressing, and constraining impact of some kinds of cyberspace interactions and experiences upon our souls. The concerns I raise are not new; they apply equally to other types of media, such as television, movies, and music. But in a cyber world, these challenges are more pervasive and intense. I plead with you to beware of the sense-dulling and spiritually destructive influence of cyberspace technologies that are used to produce high fidelity and that promote degrading and evil purposes.
6. "If the adversary cannot entice us to misuse our physical bodies, then one of his most potent tactics is to beguile you and me as embodied spirits to disconnect gradually and physically from things as they really are." (David A. Bednar, "Things as They Really Are," Ensign, June 2010, 16)
7. "... Have we ever really considered why having a physical body is so important? Now, I know we can all say the right words when answering the question about why we are here on the earth, but do we really understand why a body is so central to the Father's plan of happiness?... I would like for us to dig a bit deeper into this eternally important question about why a body is so important. Ultimately the answer affects everything we do: what we think, how we act, where we go, what we eat, what we drink, and what we wear and how we look.
8. "Now, I do not claim to know the complete answer to the question of why a physical body is so important. But let me share with you a few basic reasons why a body is essential to our spiritual development and our eternal progression.
9. "Reason no. 1. Obtaining a tabernacle of flesh is an essential step in the process of becoming like our Heavenly Father. Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, depth, and intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal estate... Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and respond to truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In this classroom of mortality we experience tenderness, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, 'according to the flesh' (1 Ne. 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).
10. "Reason no. 2. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are, by nature, creators. As the sons and daughters of God, we have the potential to become like Them. The Father and the Son have entrusted us with a portion of Their creative power and provided specific guidelines for the proper use of that sacred ability to create life and establish an eternal family. How we feel about and use that sacred power in this life will determine in large measure whether additional creative power will be ours in the life to come.
11. "Reason no. 3. As we attempt to answer the question about why we are here on the earth... please consider carefully the following statement by President Brigham Young (1801–77): 'The spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the Devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth. If the spirit yields to the body, the Devil then has power to overcome the body and spirit of that man, and he loses both.

12. "Recollect, brethren and sisters, every one of you, that when evil is suggested to you, when it arises in your hearts, it is through the temporal organization. When you are tempted, buffeted, and step out of the way inadvertently; when you are overtaken in a fault, or commit an overt act unthinkingly; when you are full of evil passion, and wish to yield to it, then stop and let the spirit, which God has put into your tabernacles, take the lead. If you do that, I will promise that you will overcome all evil, and obtain eternal lives. But many, very many, let the spirit yield to the body, and are overcome and destroyed" (Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 70)....
13. "The precise nature of the test of mortality, then, can be summarized in the following questions: Will my body rule over my spirit, or will my spirit rule over my body? Will I yield to the enticings of the natural man or to the eternal man? That, brothers and sisters, is the test. We are here on the earth to develop godlike qualities and to learn to bridle all of the passions of the flesh (see Alma 38:12)....
14. "Interestingly, I have heard many people, both outside and inside the Church, declare, "It's my body and I can do to it what I want." The correct doctrinal response to such a statement is quite simple. No, your body is not your own; it is on loan from God....
15. "Because the physical body is so central to the Father's plan of happiness and our spiritual development, we should not be surprised that Lucifer seeks to thwart our progression by enticing us to use our bodies improperly. It is to me one of the ultimate ironies of eternity that the adversary, who is miserable because he has no physical body and therefore cannot progress, seeks to make us miserable 'like unto himself' (2 Ne. 2:27) through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have and cannot use thus is the primary instrument through which he attempts to lure us to spiritual destruction.
16. Remember, our bodies are not our own; they are on loan from God. Indeed, they are temples, and the Spirit of the Lord should dwell therein and shine through. And, may I quickly add, it is harder for the Spirit to shine in and through our physical bodies when we are dozy and dull from foolishly going to bed at 1:30 A.M. or 2:30 A.M. or later night after night after night (see D&C 88:124). (David A. Bednar, "Ye Are the Temple of God," Ensign, Sept. 2001)
17. "If the body is intrinsically good, why then do the scriptures speak of the evil of being carnally minded and of the hostility between flesh and spirit? (See, for example, 2 Ne. 9:39; Rom. 8:5–7.) To understand this, we need to attend to what the prophets mean by such terms as carnal, natural man, and the flesh. As scripture uses the term, man's carnal nature is not the same as his physical nature, nor are sins of the flesh only those relating to our physical bodies. Paul lists among the 'works of the flesh' many sins that have little to do with the body and much to do with the spirit—for example, idolatry, hatred, heresies, and envyings. (Gal. 5:19–21.) He seems to equate flesh with what King Mosiah calls 'the natural man'—that lower, fallen part of our natures which tends to take us away from God. (Mosiah 3:19.) Likewise, to be in a 'carnal state' is not simply to have a physical body but to be 'carnally minded'—or full of evil desires. We become 'carnal' not by acquiring bodies (if so, children would be sinful!) but by loving evil. (Moses 5:13.) The body itself is not evil, though having a body introduces the potential for doing evil. Evil rises out of how we use the body—or rather abuse it. One of the challenges of mortality is for the spirit to learn to appropriately control the body....
18. "The intense physical pleasure the earth affords is deliberate; God intends food to taste good, landscapes to please the eye, smells to gladden the heart. Such great gifts, however, can be abused. This is the connotation of the telling word extortion—which literally means to 'twist out.' Our use of the physical world and the body must not be twisted out of the divinely ordained purposes for which they were given. Physical pleasure is good in its proper time and place, but even then it must not become our god." (John S. Tanner, "The Body as a Blessing," Ensign, July 1993)
19. "Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth" (Gordon, B. Hinckley, "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," Ensign, Sept. 1988, 11).
20. "With your body being such a vital part of God's eternal plan, it is little wonder that the Apostle Paul described it as a 'temple of God' [1 Corinthians 3:16; see also 6:19]. Each time you look in the mirror, see your body as your temple. That truth—refreshed gratefully each day—can positively influence your decisions about how you will care for your body and how you will use it." (Pres. Russell M. Nelson, "Decisions for Eternity," Ensign, Nov. 2013, 107.)

21. "As God and Christ are deserving of our reverence, so Their works are deserving of our respect and reverence. That of course includes the marvelous creation that is this earth. And yet as wonderful as this earth is, it is not the greatest of God's creations. Greater still is this marvelous physical body. It is in the very likeness of the person of God. It is essential to our earthly experience and key to our everlasting glory.
22. "How are we to preserve the sanctity of this most important and sacred of God's creations? At a minimum, we would not in any way defile our bodies." (Elder D. Todd Christofferson, "A Sense of the Sacred", Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 7, 2004, 3–4, speeches.byu.edu.)
23. "[Satan] tempts many to defile this great gift of the body through unchastity, immodesty, self-indulgence, and addictions. He seduces some to despise their bodies; others he tempts to worship their bodies. In either case, he entices the world to regard the body merely as an object. In the face of so many satanic falsehoods about the body, I want to raise my voice today in support of the sanctity of the body. I testify that the body is a gift to be treated with gratitude and respect." (Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women General President, "The Sanctity of the Body," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 13.)
24. "In this same vein may I address an even more sensitive subject. I plead with you young women to please be more accepting of yourselves, including your body shape and style, with a little less longing to look like someone else. We are all different. Some are tall, and some are short. Some are round, and some are thin. And almost everyone at some time or other wants to be something they are not! But as one adviser to teenage girls said: 'You can't live your life worrying that the world is staring at you. When you let people's opinions make you self-conscious you give away your power. ... The key to feeling [confident] is to always listen to your inner self—[the real you.]' And in the kingdom of God, the real you is 'more precious than rubies.' Every young woman is a child of destiny and every adult woman a powerful force for good. I mention adult women because, sisters, you are our greatest examples and resource for these young women. And if you are obsessing over being a size 2, you won't be very surprised when your daughter or the Mia Maid in your class does the same and makes herself physically ill trying to accomplish it. We should all be as fit as we can be—that's good Word of Wisdom doctrine. That means eating right and exercising and helping our bodies function at their optimum strength. We could probably all do better in that regard. But I speak here of optimum health; there is no universal optimum size.
25. "Frankly, the world has been brutal with you in this regard. You are bombarded in movies, television, fashion magazines, and advertisements with the message that looks are everything! The pitch is, 'If your looks are good enough, your life will be glamorous and you will be happy and popular.' That kind of pressure is immense in the teenage years, to say nothing of later womanhood. In too many cases too much is being done to the human body to meet just such a fictional (to say nothing of superficial) standard.
26. "Be a woman of Christ. Cherish your esteemed place in the sight of God. He needs you. This Church needs you. The world needs you. A woman's abiding trust in God and unflinching devotion to things of the Spirit have always been an anchor when the wind and the waves of life were fiercest." (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "To Young Women," General Conference, Oct. 2005)



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