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Your Body Has a Purpose

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Your Body Has a Purpose

Abstract

"How often do we consider using 100% of our bodies in pursuing God's redemptive call? How often do we succumb to viewing our bodies through culture's lens of graphically enhanced photos prepared for mass distribution?"

Posting about using the body to glorify God from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/your-body-has-a-purpose/>

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Your Body Has a Purpose

 inallthings.org/your-body-has-a-purpose/

Nate Wolf

Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run and take the news to the king that the LORD has vindicated him by delivering him from the hand of his enemies." "You are not the one to take the news today," Joab told him. "You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king's son is dead." Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off. Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, "Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite." But Joab replied, "My son, why do you want to go? You don't have any news that will bring you a reward." He said, "Come what may, I want to run." So Joab said, "Run!" Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain[f] and outran the Cushite. – 2 Samuel 18:19-23

I occasionally encounter people who ask me about my running. Upon my response, it is not unusual for them to respond with an apology to me about their comparative running. It is often some variation of, "Oh, well I am not a runner, I just trudge along for 20 minutes a few times a week." I inevitably wince, feeling bad that they somehow discount their efforts as something less than acceptable, something to be looked down upon. Their response and evaluation of themselves could not be further from my impression of their "20 minutes a few times a week." I am always impressed when people carve out time to be physically active, in any manner and for any duration. We were created to move; we were created to praise God through our movement. The very act of moving, nerves sending messages and muscles firing in a coordinated manner, is acknowledging God's workmanship.

We live in a cultural climate that glamorizes and glorifies the sexuality and strength of the human body, especially athletic bodies. Recently ESPN has capitalized on this cultural obsession in its "ESPN: The Magazine Body Issue," which looks at naked bodies of various athletes with "tastefully" placed arms, legs, hair, or sport-specific objects. This publication seems to reduce the human body to its basic animalistic nature, at best glorifying women and men for what they can physically accomplish with their sculpted and diverse physiques. At worst, acting as socially acceptable soft-core pornography.

Additionally, our culture looks at athletes in a statistical manner. Whether it is times or distances in track and field, 40m dash times at the NFL, or wing-span in the NBA, there is a reduction of the person to the measurables of the athlete. It is not dissimilar to inspecting a thoroughbred horse prior to the Kentucky Derby to determine the best specimen to bet on. This is not limited to college athletes' attempts at making a career in sport, but extends to high school athletes as well. Taking a look at any online sport chat room and the terms used to describe physically maturing high school students would make any conscientious person cringe.

Ahimaaz illustrates a different reason to be athletic: to be prepared to passionately perform any task God places before us. In 2 Samuel 18, Ahimaaz begs Joab to run and tell King David the news that Abasalom, the King's son, has died. Joab and Ahimaaz both know that King David may not respond positively to this news and Joab tries to protect Ahimaaz from the uncertain outcome by sending a Cushite to deliver the news. I love Ahimaaz's response: "Come what may, I want to run." Exasperated, Joab relents with a simple, "Run!" Ahimaaz was prepared and passionate to perform his duty, regardless of the outcome.

How often do we consider using 100% of our bodies in pursuing God's redemptive call? How often do we succumb to viewing our bodies through culture's lens of graphically enhanced photos prepared for mass distribution? Are we spurred on by simple vanity or by a compulsive desire for false control? Or, are we preparing to answer God's call in fullness, with our body, soul, and mind?

Being an athlete and honoring God with our body has little to do with our physical gifts of running, jumping, or throwing, and more to do with our preparedness to respond to him where we are and with what he has given us. This preparation looks different for all of us. Some people struggle with physical ailments that limit their physical response. For these people, there is even more reason to be fully prepared, as we know that God will work through our weaknesses. I am not suggesting everyone should be prepared to run a marathon, but are we prepared to fully answer God's call instead of busily comparing our physical limitations to someone else and thus withhold this aspect from God's story working through us?

At a previous school, I had a co-worker that had been a standout linebacker in college. Through a farm accident, he is unable to walk without a cane and utilizes a wheelchair for much of his movement. One afternoon, I was walking past the weight room and heard voices raising in unison. As I walked in to observe, I encountered 20 athletes surrounding one of the racks. My co-worker was repping out chin-ups – 10, 11, 12 of them – while still strapped into his wheelchair. The example of perseverance and character was not lost on those standing and encouraging him. He speaks regularly to FCA at the school and his message of trusting in God's plan and persevering through adversity is strengthened by his example.

My encouragement for all is to see our bodies as athletic, created by God to adapt to stress and become stronger as a result. God created us and has called us to serve him fully. This includes being physically prepared to respond to the Lord as tall, short, thin, thick, mobile, immobile, strong, or weak people of God. The Creator made bodies capable of incredible feats of strength and endurance, yet delicate enough to lightly press the strings of a violin or delicately play the piano. Can we step outside of our athletic body image-focused culture and into a Christian culture that sees the body as part of the answer to Christ's call to follow Him fully? Are you prepared to fully answer God's call?