

JAMES EVERLY



A Balanced Approach to Health and Wellness

HEALTH THROUGH PRAYER

Enlisting God's
Help to Achieve
the Health and Body
You Deserve



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Disclaimer:

This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of your physician. You should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to your health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention. You should not undertake any significant changes to your diet or lifestyle without first consulting your physician. Each individual has a unique set of circumstances related to his or her health that is best evaluated by a physician to determine whether a regimen is safe and appropriate. These considerations are especially important for anyone with specific health issues, women who are pregnant or nursing, and anyone taking prescription medications. Nothing in this book is meant to suggest that you should disregard your physician's guidance.

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Introduction

Imagine that you were responsible for managing a beautiful church and were given an ample budget, how would you proceed? Would you let the foundation crack and the walls crumble, or would you make sure that they are strong and repaired as necessary? Would you tolerate peeling paint and the buildup of dust, dirt, and litter, or would you ensure that the building was kept painted and clean? Would you let the surrounding lawn and bushes become overgrown, or would you see to it that they were well-groomed? The answer to all of these questions is obvious. You would go to great lengths to make sure that the church—a place for honoring God—is kept up in the best manner possible.

It may surprise you to realize that this is not just an academic question. You have indeed been placed in charge of managing God's greatest house of worship:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

There are many excellent reasons to take good care of your body. You can lessen or avoid entirely the discomfort, pain, and expense associated with many illnesses, diseases, and chronic conditions, both mild and severe. You can feel rested, strong, energetic, and happy on a daily basis, instead of being tired and down. You can enjoy the increased self-esteem and confidence that comes from being in control and from looking and feeling the way you want to. And you can enjoy a higher-quality, longer, and more productive life. Perhaps the best reason, though, for taking good care of yourself is found in the quote above from 1 Corinthians. Your body is not your own—God has placed the Holy Spirit in the temple that is your body, with the instruction to honor God with your body. In this light, good care of your body is an important element of your faith.

Taking proper care of yourself, however, can be challenging. It requires knowledge, discipline, effort, and persistence. But it is an extremely worthwhile endeavor, and you do not have to do it alone.

This book will help you to establish a regular practice of prayer to enlist God's help in meeting health-related goals that you will set for yourself. Moreover, this book provides fundamental and practical information about how to take excellent care of yourself. Each chapter addresses a single topic related to your health, and provides specific information about how to make improvements that will yield real benefits. Each chapter also includes a discussion of relevant passages from the Bible, specific prayers related to each topic, and suggested exercises to help focus your work. Combining the benefits of your faith

and devotion to God with practical and proven approaches to health will enable you to reach your goals.

Who This Book Is For

Anyone who wants to improve his or her general health.

The program described in this book can help you improve your overall health, allowing you to feel better, have more energy, and improve your ability to avoid illness.

Anyone who wants to lose excess weight. Being overweight can lead to various health problems and can harm your self-esteem and confidence, so losing excess weight is a worthwhile goal. In many cases, the changes in diet and lifestyle described in this book can help to bring about the desired changes in weight and size.

Anyone who wants to address specific health concerns. This program may also help with specific health concerns, such as high cholesterol or elevated blood pressure. Many health issues can be significantly improved by using the common-sense approaches outlined in this book. Please note, however, that if you have been diagnosed with or are concerned about any particular condition or disease, it is crucial that you work with your physician to address that condition and to determine the safety and appropriateness of any program, including this one.

How to Use This Book

This book addresses a wide variety of issues that together comprise a balanced approach to your health and well-being. Many

chapters address concrete issues such as diet and nutrition, exercise, sleep, and stress reduction. Other chapters cover important topics such as praying to God about your health, resisting temptation, and self-forgiveness. Generally, the topics are presented in a sequential and cumulative manner. The early chapters address basic concepts—fundamental changes that can yield tremendous results and that provide the foundation for the more advanced concepts presented later in the book.

Of course, read through the book at whatever pace is comfortable for you. When it comes to making the changes described, take the chapters in the order they are presented, and take the time to master the lessons of each chapter (or at least make significant progress) before moving on to the next chapter. Not every chapter will apply equally or present the same challenges to everyone, so different people will progress at different speeds. If at any time you find progress difficult, remind yourself that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in addition to the many benefits of better health for you, perseverance in this program is an excellent way to honor God.

Important Note to Readers

The author of this book is not a doctor, has no specific health or wellness training, and is not an expert in any health-related field. This book synthesizes information from publicly available sources about a variety of potentially complicated health issues and presents that information in a way that is logical and easy to

understand. The result is a simple and powerful book that can help in your efforts to improve your health or to lose weight.

However, no book can be a substitute for the care and guidance of your physician, and you should not undertake any significant changes to your diet or lifestyle without first consulting your physician. Each individual has a unique set of circumstances related to his or her health that is best evaluated by a physician to determine whether a regimen is safe and appropriate. These considerations are especially important for anyone with specific health issues, women who are pregnant or nursing, and anyone taking prescription medications. Nothing in this book is meant to suggest that you should disregard your physician's guidance.



Chapter 1

Establishing a Practice of Praying for Your Health

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7–8

Summary. The very first step in the *Health Through Prayer* program is establishing a practice of praying to God about your health. Prayer should be a central element of any endeavor, and working to improve your health or lose weight is no exception. Prayer, in addition to concrete actions, will help you to meet your goals.

Matthew 7:7–8 is the starting point on the journey to better health through prayer and action. Although this is a well-known passage, it is worth a fresh look. This passage is from the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus explained, among other things, that we should not judge others,

we should love our enemies, and we should treat others in the way that we would like to be treated.

Among these important passages, we find the famous phrase “Ask and it will be given to you.” In this manner, we are invited to pray to God. And we are told, “everyone who asks receives.” Many other passages in the Bible echo this idea, such as James 5:16 (“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”) and Matthew 21:22 (“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer”). Prayer, then, should be considered a fundamental element of any endeavor. As in other matters in life, your work toward feeling and looking better should be based in prayer. Pray regularly and sincerely as you work toward your goals, and God in his wisdom and grace will take care of the rest.

Note, though, that the last sentence above says that you should pray *as you work* toward your goals. Yes, you will still need to do the work necessary to reach your goals. Matthew 7:7 instructs us to “seek” and “knock” in addition to asking through prayer. These words describe action, and suggest that prayer and action are a most powerful combination. In that spirit, each step of this program combines prayer with specific actions to move you toward your goals. You must walk down the road to your destination, but God will support you along the way.

Over the course of this program, you will address—through prayer *and* action—various issues related to your health and well-being. Central to this effort will be examining the quality and quantity of what and how you eat. Your diet is, of course, central to any efforts to improve your health or lose weight. But this

book also addresses several other lifestyle factors that play critical roles in your health and appearance, such as exercise, sleep, and stress.

It is fine to ease into this gently, however, and for the moment, simply focus on getting into the habit of praying to God about your health. Your practice of prayer should become comfortable and routine, as it will serve as the foundation for all of the subsequent exercises in this program. Moreover, this step will reflect the seriousness of your intention to build your relationship with God through your pursuit of good health, and it will help to promote the discipline that is central to this undertaking. In the next couple of chapters, you will take the first steps to improve your diet, and you will set some specific goals for yourself.

A Note About the Prayers and Praying

This book sets forth suggested prayers for each topic. These prayers have been carefully crafted to suit the lessons and exercises in each chapter and can be used as written with confidence. Of course, they cannot account for each individual's circumstances and goals, and can be modified as appropriate to address your specific needs. Establish regular times each day that are set aside for prayer—it need only be a few minutes—and you should find a quiet, private place to pray, as urged in Matthew 6:6: “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Prayer & Exercise

- ▶ At least three times a day for the next few days (or more often if you prefer), recite the following prayer:

Lord, please guide me as I undertake this effort to improve my health and appearance. Please grant me the wisdom and strength to make better decisions about my diet and lifestyle.

- ▶ Start to think about the general state of your health, with a focus on your diet and exercise. Try to consider objectively which areas need the most improvement, and begin to formulate in your mind the goals that you would like to achieve through this program.

Chapter 2

The First Step to Better Health

*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving
for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

2 Corinthians 4:17

Summary. Simply eliminating the worst elements of your diet can have an enormous, positive impact on your health and appearance.

Normally, it would make little sense to set out on a journey without having given some thought to the destination. You would usually set your goals first, and then take steps to move toward those goals. In this case, however, you're going to take the first step toward better health and weight loss *before* you address setting goals. This is because there is one step that you can take right away that is so fundamental for improving your health that there are few health- or appearance-related goals to which it does not apply. This first step involves diet, which is so central to health that there is no reason to delay in making basic improvements. The topic of setting appropriate goals will be addressed in the next chapter.