

Why did this concept stand out to you?

The section chosen here for reflection was chapter 9: Transforming the Body. The reality of the importance of our physical bodies is rarely acknowledged by the church. As Willard writes “for usual human beings in the usual circumstances, their body runs their life.” (Willard, 168) The devotion of time and energy simply to meeting one’s physical needs has been highlighted in our society by men such as Christopher Reeves and Michael J. Fox who were and are compelled by their physical limitations to campaign for cures to disease and illness that they knew nothing of, and had no concern for prior to living with there afflictions. Surely in their work to convince others to find cures to their afflictions they seek to return to the usual human routine of having a totally healthy body that will allow their lives to run properly. The culture that we live in seems so strongly persuaded that a better life can be lived if one is healthy, and “living well” with all of the creature comforts intact, somehow this will free us so that we can live to our fullest potential. While illness and infirmity rob us of who we are and lack of comfort keep us from utilizing our full potential. I doubt highly that Joni Erickson-Tada sees this as a true reality.

What impact does it suggest for you personally?

When Willard refers to Romans 12:1-2 (Willard, 170) I had a moment of epiphany, the thoughts that overwhelmed me in that moment were not that I would stand in some large pulpit or speak God’s word to throngs of His people, but rather that when you offer yourself for service, you need to be prepared to serve in whatever way you are called. This means humility. It’s easy for me to do the things that bring recognition and

swell my human ego. The challenge in service for me has always been, will I be responsible for the little things. Are my britches too big to clean the bathrooms of a church well and take joy in the level of service that God has called me too? Willard offers the reasonable service of our body to be for it to turn away from evil and he alludes to standard areas that we know are temptations without going into detail. I however, was impacted by the serious nature of the ego as a driving force of the body and the need for humility as I offer my body to God as His resource. I give up the right to decide what this tool should be used for, God becomes the coach and He becomes the judge of what position I play on His team. Just to be on His team is an honor regardless of the role, and just because I think I have talent, or want to play my way does not mean that I ignore God's direction.

Where do you agree with the author? Disagree?

Dr. Willard makes many strong points and through his chapter concluding list draws his discussion of the physical body to a solid conclusion. I agree wholeheartedly in his list as follows: 1. Release your body to God. 2. No longer idolize your body. 3. Do not misuse your body. 4. The body is to be properly honored and cared for. This list should be applied to my regular prayer time as too often we do not focus on the bodily world that we live in. While we certainly are doing spiritual warfare, God at no time in scripture condemns matter nor teaches us to abhor who we are or how we have been made. As Willard suggests ignoring who we are physically can lead us to greater temptation and sin.

My disagreement with this text comes not from what is found on the page, but rather a crucial question when dealing with the body and physical matters. What of the

sick and afflicted? How do those whose physical conditions limit them fit into Willard's philosophy. Surely Jesus spent a great deal of time healing the bodies of the sick and afflicted, did this mean that only the healthy are to offer their bodies to God? Does God value a healthy body more than a crippled one? While I do realize that this writer was staying focused on his message and had limited space for examining this dimension of human existence the closest he came to dealing with the impaired was when he referred to a baby suckling its thumb. A short sentence here or there examining how these same features could be utilized by the infirm could have expanded his message to those who deal with serious health issues and not make this chapter seem to provide guidance for the healthy or those that can be healthy.

How should this concept be translated into practical ministry?

Ministry always has an element of leadership. Serving others means setting an example and one way to do this is through taking steps in every area of your life to live as God desires. Through taking the steps that Willard suggests personally and encouraging a ministry staff to do so as well, the body of Christ will mature in a physical way. I believe this makes a spiritual impact as well; much like cross training has its benefits so turning over our physical bodies to God will assist us in growing spiritually as well.

Ignoring the physical can lead to temptation in many areas and the loss of ministry and a great damage can be done to God's church. The concepts delivered by Willard in this chapter need to be heard and responded to by those involved in ministry. After all nothing could be more practical to us than dealing with the physical. We deal with buildings grounds finances and church vans, but many times ignore our own physical bodies at church. This chapter highlighted to me how shameful this can be.