



In a recent op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, poet and writer in residence at Vanderbilt University, Caroline Randall Williams, wrote this in reference to the raging debate about confederate monuments: *“My light-brown-blackness is a living testament to the rules, the practices, the causes of the Old South. If there are those who want to remember the legacy of the Confederacy, if they want monuments, well, then, my body is a monument. My skin is a monument.”*

This is not a devotion about confederate monuments, but I would commend Ms. Williams’ article to you. It is eloquently written and thought provoking. You can find it here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/opinion/confederate-monuments-racism.html>

This is a devotion about our bodies and the need to take care of ourselves. Williams’ article made me think of what the apostle Paul said to the Christians at Corinth: *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”*

Many of you know that I have been a lifelong athlete, and that taking care of my body is important. This comes not only from my love of sports, but also from growing up with my father who was a chain smoker for most of his adult life. My memories of his coughing and hacking first thing in the morning, even while he was well into his first cigarette and cup of coffee of the day, remain vivid. Eventually he stopped, but only after receiving a lung cancer diagnosis from his doctor.

Since the advent of the coronavirus crisis, we may have found it more difficult to take care of our bodies. Restricted to home, limited to where we may go, unpredictable Cleveland weather, and the temporary closing of gyms and recreation centers may have led to a breakdown in our normal exercise routines and eating habits. I was forced to ride outside much earlier than I would have liked, but all that cold weather gear I invested in came in handy. I found myself snacking more, sometimes out of sheer boredom. With the summer weather allowing for more outside activities, perhaps we have adjusted, and we’ve gotten our bodies moving again, and hopefully we’re eating healthier.

Whatever we are doing at this point it's good to remember that our bodies are a gift from God, "a temple of the Holy Spirit" within us, and we are called to use our bodies to "glorify God." That means paying attention to our diets, making sure we get enough exercise, and refraining from things that may harm our bodies. This may sound like a strange question, but what might others learn about God from the way we care for our bodies? I think that's at least one thing Paul was trying to get us to think about.

This was at least a minor theme in Paul's writings. In Romans 12:1 he says, "*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*" It's important to take care of ourselves, especially during this time. Think of it as a spiritual discipline or practice, a way to glorify God and to witness to God's goodness to others.

In Christ,

Pastor Chuck

**Let us pray. Lord God, we give you thanks for our bodies, in whatever condition they may be in at the present moment. We may not be happy with our bodies, or we may be quite satisfied with how we look and feel. Whatever the case may be, help us to be good and faithful stewards of the bodies you have given us. And help us to remember that our bodies are a gift that can bear witness to your glory. Amen**