

Health: Stewarding the Gift of Your Body

Main Point

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and a means by which you worship God through what you do each day. If you are to flourish in the third third of life, you should steward well the gift of your body, through which you can glorify God.

Preface

Greetings!

This is the third section of the six-part course: “Flourishing in the Third Third of Life.” In section one, we focused on the promise in Scripture of flourishing even as we get older. Last time, we saw just how much relationships matter for flourishing, based on Scripture and scientific studies. If you want to live fully and fruitfully in the third third of life, nurture close, committed relationships.

Today, our topic is “*Health: Stewarding the Gift of Your Body.*”

Introduction

I expect it’s intuitive to all of us that flourishing in the third third of life is connected to physical and mental health. What we know from experience and common sense is backed up by those who study these things. For example, the Harvard Human Flourishing Project includes as one of its key measures of flourishing physical and mental health (<https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/measuring-flourishing>).

As I tackle the subject of health in this lecture, I’m aware that people *respond to this topic in a variety of ways*. I’m sure that some of you are doing well when it comes to your health. So you may approach this topic with curiosity, even eagerness, hoping to learn something new and beneficial.

For some of us, however, this is not an easy subject. Perhaps you're struggling with health challenges, so this issue reminds you of painful parts of your life. Or maybe you really don't want to be reminded of the physical and mental losses that inevitably come with aging. So, you have mixed feelings, even negative ones about this presentation.

Still others of us may approach this topic quite aware that there are certain health-related areas of our lives in which we are *not making the best choices*. You may be feeling bad about yourself or wrestling with considerable shame. Part of you knows that the topic of health is essential, and you need to deal with some hard things in your life. And, frankly, another part of you wishes you were skipping this lecture.

¹What I want to say up front is that if we're going to approach the topic of health from a Christian perspective, whatever else might be true, *we need to do so with grace*. You and I live in response to God's grace given through Jesus Christ. Every aspect of life is touched by God's grace, including our bodies and how we steward them. When we talk about health, *we need to be gracious with each other and, crucially, with ourselves*. We need to remember that God loves us unconditionally and his love will never let us go.

Therefore, I want to invite you to *take a deep breath and relax*. This talk is meant to inform, encourage, and help you. There's no place for shame here. But there is a place to learn more about how we might take good care of and use well the bodies God has entrusted to us.

Some Common Narratives of Aging Bodies

I'd like to think with you about some common narratives related to our bodies and aging.

The Disease and Decline Narrative

The Disease and Decline Narrative accentuates the physical and mental losses that come with aging. As we get older, our bodies lose strength and cannot do what they once did. That's true for all human beings. Of course, some folks in the third third have major mental and/or physical

health challenges. For these and their families we must share loving concern and offer practical care.

But the fact that some older adults struggle with major health challenges does not mean everyone does. The majority of third third folk are relatively healthy in body and mind. Thus, the Disease and Decline narrative is neither accurate or complete. This narrative of older adulthood, which became especially common during the COVID-19 pandemic, is assumed to be relevant to all people in the third third of life. The fact is, however, that most of us in this season of life maintain solid physical and mental fitness, at least for many years. Plus, through making wise choices, we can often enhance and extend our good health as we age.

The Superman or Wonder Woman Narrative

There is an alternative to the Disease and Decline narrative that shows up fairly often in popular media. It's what I'd call the "Superman or Wonder Woman" narrative. It focuses on the physical accomplishments of some pretty amazing older adults.²

For example, [Harriette Thompson](#), a world-class concert pianist, became a marathon runner. She completed her first marathon at age 76, and her final marathon at 92, setting the record as the oldest woman to finish a marathon. She was, I might add, a mother of five, grandmother of 10, and a two-time cancer survivor. Her "Wonder Woman" narrative showed up in all sorts of media outlets, including the [New York Times](#) and [Fox News](#).

Now, I don't know how you respond to these "Wonder Woman" or "Superman" narratives. I find myself both encouraged and discouraged: encouraged, because they show how much potential older adults have; and discouraged, because there's no way I'm going to be anything like Harriette Thompson. My knees just wouldn't allow it.

If we reject the Disease and Decline narrative, and if we admit that the Superman/Wonder Woman narrative is not relevant for most of us, we recognize that we need a narrative that fits who we are and realistically aspire to be. We need a narrative based on serious science and, most of all, on Scripture. We need to let the Bible shape the way we think about

our bodies and the way we care for and use them. So, to Scripture we turn now.

A Biblical Narrative of Bodies and Aging

If we are seeking a biblical narrative of bodies and aging, we begin with Genesis 1. There we see that human bodies are an essential part of God's very good creation. In particular, they are a means by which human beings can do the work God delegated to us: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen 1:27-28). So the Bible begins by showing human bodies in a very positive light.

But the beauty and excellence of our bodies are damaged by sin, as we learn in Genesis 3. Because of sin, we experience pain, frailty, and, ultimately, death in our bodies. Genesis 3:19 says we are dust and to dust we shall return.³

Scripture acknowledges the physical limitations and losses of aging. The writer of Psalm 71 urges God, "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent" (71:9). Older people do eventually lose physical strength. That's a fact of life.⁴

Ecclesiastes 12 offers a painful and poetic picture of aging and its hardships (12:1-8). It begins with this exhortation: "Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (12:1). What follows is a poetic lament concerning the aging of our bodies. "In the day when the guards of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, . . . and those who look through the windows see dimly . . . and the sound of the grinding is low" (12:3-4). To put it prosaically, when we get older our arms and legs become weak, our vision dims, and we experience hearing loss. All of this happens before "the dust returns to the earth as it was" (12:7).

Biblical passages like Ecclesiastes 12 prompt us to acknowledge honestly the physical difficulties that come with aging, including our own aging. Flourishing in the third third of life does not depend on denial, pretending,

or wishful thinking. It faces squarely the challenges we encounter as well as the opportunities we embrace and the blessings we cherish.

But the aging of our bodies is not the whole biblical story. Though acknowledging the difficulties of getting older, the Bible also celebrates older people and old age. For example, Proverbs 16:31 says “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.” Proverbs 20:29 adds, “The glory of youths is their strength, but the beauty of the aged is their gray hair.”

Furthermore, God often uses older adults for crucial tasks. Examples include:

- Abraham and Sarah, who were 100 and 90 when they conceived Isaac (Gen 12:4, 17:17)⁵
- In the book of Joshua, Caleb receives his inheritance at 85 years old, stating that he is as strong at 85 as he was at 40 (Josh 14:6-15).
- Elizabeth and Zechariah conceived their son John when “both were getting on in years” as it says in Luke 1:7. Nine months later, Elizabeth gave birth to the person we know as John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-79).

So, the Bible shows us that God is pleased to use older bodies for his kingdom purposes.

Though Scripture offers positive narratives of old age, it also notes that we join all creation by “groaning in travail” as we wait for “the redemption of our bodies,” as we read in Romans 8:23. Yes, we groan in this age, but Christians have confident hope that in God’s future our bodies will be raised and transformed (see Romans 8 and also 1 Corinthians 15).⁶ “So,” Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, “we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.”⁷

Moreover, in 1 Corinthians 6 you learn that your body is a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). You belong to God and should “glorify God in [your] body” (1 Cor 6:20). Similarly, Romans 12:1 urges you and all believers to “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Jesus, echoing Old Testament revelation, says you should love the Lord “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and *with all your mind, and with all your strength*” (Mark 12:30), that is, with your body.⁸

There is a lot of talk these days about the possibility of much greater human longevity. Scientists talk about living to 150 years of age.⁹ Though I have nothing against a long life if I’m healthy, I’m not fixated on trying to make it to 100. As Christians, we are not looking for the elixir of life. We are not trying to live forever in our mortal bodies because we know that our bodies will be transformed when God’s kingdom comes in all its fulness (see 1 Cor 15:51-53). In the meanwhile, we strive to honor the temple of our bodies so that we might live for God’s glory in this age, offering our bodies to God as worship in all that we do. Thus, we are motivated by our love for God to learn how to steward well the bodies God has given us, for his glory and for our flourishing.

So, what is the biblical narrative of bodies and aging? It begins with the created goodness of our bodies. That goodness is corrupted by sin, which brings about frailty and physical death. Scripture acknowledges that growing old can be physically debilitating. In this age, our bodies join all creation by groaning in travail. We ache for the time when our bodies will be redeemed. Nevertheless, throughout the Bible we see God using older people in amazing ways. *In all seasons of life, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, a means by which we glorify God. Therefore, we should steward our bodies well so that we might use them wisely for God’s purposes.*

Practical Suggestions for Stewarding Your Body

Stewarding our bodies well means caring about our physical and mental health. To be sure, we cannot control all the factors that contribute to good health. Some of it has to do with our genes.¹⁰ But we are not helpless when it comes to our physical and mental wellbeing. (In fact,

research shows that those who believe they are helpless when it comes to health in old age actually die sooner than those who believe they can make a difference.¹¹⁾

In the next part of this lecture, I want to give you some practical recommendations for stewarding your body. I will offer ten suggestions of things you can do (and not do) to steward your body faithfully.

It took me quite a while to figure out how to formulate these suggestions. After all, there is a mountain of information available, much of it through the internet, concerning the physical and mental health of older adults.¹² For example, I did a Google search on “healthy aging” and found 423,000,000 results. I have not checked out all of those websites yet!

But I have read dozens and dozens of peer-reviewed research studies, several books, and the contents of many websites in search of reliable advice on stewarding your body in the third third of life. The suggestions I’ll offer reflect the consensus of trustworthy sources, including: the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute of Aging, Harvard Health Publishing, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and similar sources.

Yet, I want to be crystal clear that I am not an expert in medical science, physiology, nutrition, or gerontology. My Ph.D. is in New Testament and biblical studies. That’s where my expertise lies. But I have tried to read widely and curate wisely from all that I have read so as to give you the best wisdom I can find. Nevertheless, in matters of physical health, I urge you to talk with your doctor (or doctors) about what’s best for you. You can also check the sources I’ve relied upon, all of which are listed in the notes for this talk.

Let me add that I do not expect you to relate to all of these suggestions. I imagine you’ll think to yourself, “Oh, I already know that.” Or “That one’s not really relevant to me.” That’s just fine. But let me encourage you to pay attention to any suggestion – it could be just one – that jumps out at you as something worth pursuing. Make a note to yourself to follow up.

So, with no further ado, here are ten suggestions for how to steward well the temple of your body in the third third of life.

The first suggestion is . . .

[Read this and the following titles.]

1. Be physically active.

This is the most common advice for healthy aging, along with eating wisely (see #2 below). Every reliable source of wisdom about aging well recommends consistent and intentional physical exercise.

Now, according to [recent statistics from the CDC](#), about a third of American adults 65 and older reported doing no physical activity. Others do so, but irregularly. If you're someone who doesn't have a consistent exercise regimen, I have good news for you. Effective exercise does not have to be extensive or intensive. In fact, walking is highly recommended, as are other forms of moderate exercise adding up to 150 minutes a week. That's only 21 ½ minutes a day, by the way.¹³ Research shows it's never too late to start benefitting from exercise. Even those who begin exercising in their 80s experience improvement in health.¹⁴ .¹⁵

Suggestion #1 is “Be physically active.” Number 2, which is also found everywhere you look for information about health and older adulthood, is . . .

2. Practice healthy eating.

Though different sources emphasize different aspects of healthy eating, almost all agree that you should eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and healthy proteins. You should limit your intake of unhealthy sugars, processed foods, unhealthy fats, and sugared drinks. Also, make sure you get adequate fiber and water on a regular basis.

I'll share with you one of my personal secrets that helps me eat more of healthy food and less of unhealthy food, even the stuff I love. Here it is: Eat plentiful amounts of healthy food you actually like. This rule of thumb helps me eat less of unhealthy food that I love. For example, I grew up eating ice cream for dessert every night. I love ice cream, the richer the

better. When I was 25, I could polish off a nightly pint of ice cream without gaining a pound. Now, in my third third of life, I'd probably gain an extra pound every single night. But, rather than just fighting off the urge for ice cream in the evening, I satisfy myself with a bowl of berries. They're tasty and sweet. Not as creamy as ice cream, but way better for me. Ice cream is only for special occasions. Berries help me to keep it that way.

Speaking of berries, let me encourage you to pay attention to trustworthy sources for new research findings related to diet. I'm not talking about the latest fads, but about what serious researchers have found.¹⁶ For example, a recent study in the scientific journal *Neurology*¹⁷ showed that higher flavonoid intake helps to maintain cognitive functioning in older adulthood. Flavonoids are chemical compounds found in colorful fruits and vegetables such as spinach, yellow peppers, kale, tea, citrus fruits, and . . . yes, berries! Blackberries, blueberries, cherries, and other berries are rich in flavonoids. So, my ice cream replacement dessert turns out to be even better than I realized. I'm helping my brain to be stronger. Who'd a thunk it?

Now, I'm not assuming that we will all start reading the journal *Neurology* on a regular basis. But we can find popular summaries of serious research showing up regularly in ordinary news sources. Keep your eyes open.¹⁸ Plus, if you sign up for the De Pree Center's monthly e-newsletter, *Third Third Life*, we'll help you keep up to date on some of the latest research.

So far, I've offered two suggestions:

1. Be physically active.
2. Practice healthy eating.

If you do both of these, it's likely that #3 will come naturally . . .

3. Maintain a healthy weight.

None of the trustworthy sources are supporting the kind of obsession that much of our culture has when it comes to weight. But weight is one indicator of physical health. That's why the first thing they say when you

go to the doctor is: Please get on the scale! Ironically, given how much many of us have to work at keeping the pounds off, for people over 80, healthy weight often means “packing extra pounds,” according to an article on the AARP website.¹⁹

Suggestion #4 is . . .

4. Don't smoke.

Although the oldest person in recent history smoked until she was 117, she was clearly an exception to the rule. Every reliable source of advice out there agrees: If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do, get help to quit. Quitting at any age brings positive health results.²⁰

May I add that Christians often don't get help to quit smoking because they hide their habit. As a pastor, I've had many mature Christians share with me their struggle with smoking, often with great shame. So, let me say, if you smoke, find someone safe with whom to talk. And if you don't smoke, don't start, and don't look down on smokers. We all have our stuff, right? We need to be gracious in our effort to be healthy.

Here is suggestion #5 . . .

5. If you drink alcohol, exercise moderation.

Researchers have mixed opinions about whether moderate drinking (especially of red wine) has health benefits, but all trustworthy advisors warn against excessive use of alcohol (which is usually defined as more than two drinks daily for men or one drink daily for women). George Vaillant, former director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development writes in his book *Aging Well*, “Alcohol abuse . . . consistently predicted unsuccessful aging” (p. 13).

I realize that many Christians believe we shouldn't drink at all. I was raised by some staunch teetotalers, so I respect that point of view. Though I no longer believe that alcohol consumption is always wrong, I recognize the benefits that come from limiting alcohol intake. Moreover, in

many situations, we need to avoid drinking in support of those who are in recovery or need to be in recovery.²¹

The sixth suggestion is one that I didn't at first expect to see in so many trusted sources, though it certainly is something I need to get better at. Suggestion #6 is . . .

6. Get enough good sleep.

Doctors and researchers agree that older adults, like younger people, need 7 to 9 hours each night. In fact, a [study published earlier this year](#) found that people who routinely sleep less than six hours per night in their 50s and 60s had a 30% increased risk of dementia in later life.

Expert recommendations for sleep are pretty standard. They include such things as:

- Going to bed at the same time every night.
- Avoiding screens before bedtime.
- Avoiding big meals, caffeine, or alcohol late in the day and evening.
- Making sure your bedroom is dark and quiet, and that the temperature is comfortable for you. (That can be adventure if you're married!)

Sometimes sleep difficulties are related to more serious problems, like [sleep apnea](#). So if you're not sleeping well or long enough, be sure to talk with your doctor.²²

Now we're at suggestion #7 . . .

7. Exercise your brain.

Every organization concerned with third third flourishing recommends physical exercise. Most also encourage us to exercise our brains.

There is much neuroscience-informed wisdom in John Medina's [Brain Rules for Aging Well](#). He strongly recommends lifelong learning: "Enroll in

a class. Pick up a new language. Read until you can't see anything anymore. An aging brain is fully capable of learning new things" (p. 101).

According to an article from *Harvard Health Publishing*, so-called "super-agers," those who do amazing physical and mental things as they get older, embrace mental challenges that stretch and stimulate them. The article, "[What does it take to be a super-ager?](#)" includes this observation: "Research suggests that moving out of your comfort zone is the key to staying mentally and physically young." The article offers an intriguing list of possibilities:

If you enjoy crossword puzzles, you may want to take on acrostics or mathematical games. Try doing something yourself that you would have hired someone else to do in the past — perhaps calculating your income taxes, assembling a piece of flat-packed furniture, or installing new computer software. Volunteer for a project that may seem little intimidating, like tutoring students who are trying to master English as a second language or registering voters for the next election.²³

In the context of the church, I've seen older adults stretch themselves in wonderful ways by going on mission trips, feeding folks in homeless shelters, teaching Sunday school, or mentoring young parents. A man from my home church just began his first term as an elder. He is 92 years old and going strong.²⁴

Suggestion #8 is one you've surely run into many times . . .

8. See your doctor regularly.

The Centers for Disease Control [put it this way](#): "*Get Regular Checkups*. Visit your doctor for preventive services, not just when you're sick. This can prevent disease or find it early, when treatment is more effective." Of course, for many of us in the third third, this suggestion might better be said, "See your *doctors* regularly."

Now, I expect many of you do see your doctor or doctors on a regular basis. Good for you! Others of you may not for a variety of reasons,

including: fear of what might be discovered or embarrassment, stigma, or shame related to your physical or psychological problems. If this sounds familiar to you, talk with a wise friend, a pastor, or a counselor. Get the help you need so you can establish a regular pattern of doctor visits.

Suggestion #9 will sound familiar . . .

9. Develop and nurture core relationships.

This suggestion reiterates what we learned in the last session when focusing on “Relationships! Relationships! Relationships!” The Harvard Study of Adult Development found that the strongest predictor of health at 80 was good relationships at 50. That principle holds true beyond 50. Having caring, committed, engaged relationships in the third third of life contributes greatly to flourishing. So, once again we are encouraged to focus on building and nurturing core relationships with family and close friends. Intergenerational relationships are particularly good for our brains.

We’re now up to Suggestion #10, the last suggestion. It’s pretty simple:

10. Laugh!

That’s right, laugh!

This final suggestion does not show up often among trustworthy sources of wisdom for successful aging. So I’m going to break my rules a bit here. But this suggestion does reflect a wide variety of scientific studies from many different countries and cultures. Sven Svebak, a professor from Norway, observed, “A friendly sense of humor will bless you with better social relations as well as coping skills, and the reduced risk of dying early.”²⁵

How can you laugh more? Well, you probably know what works for you. And now you have greater motivation to do it. Perhaps you can:

- Enjoy TV shows you find funny.
- Spend time with friends with whom you laugh.
- Play with your grandchildren and other young people.

- Watch your favorite comedy films again and again.

If you were to add up all the laughter in my life and figure out where it comes from, you'd soon discover my love of the film *Groundhog Day*. I first watched it in the summer of 1993. While on vacation, I stayed up late one night and watched it all by myself. I can't remember when I've laughed harder in my entire life. I literally laughed until it hurt. Since then, I've watched *Groundhog Day* probably 20 times, at least. When my son was about eight, I introduced him to the film. He loved it, and so began a family tradition of watching that movie every year on, you guessed it, Groundhog Day.

Groundhog Day may not be your cup of tea and that's fine. But treat yourself to watching a favorite film that makes you laugh. Your body and mind will be glad you did.

Conclusion: How Being a Christian Helps You to Steward Your Body Wisely

So, there you have ten suggestions for you how can steward the temple of your body by engaging in practices that will improve and sustain your health. I do hope at least one stands out to you as something worth more attention.

It's obvious by now that my ten suggestions are not distinctively Christian. But I do believe that our faith will help us follow these suggestions in distinctively Christian ways. So, in closing, I'd like to talk about how being a Christian helps you to steward your body wisely.

First, our faith teaches us to see stewarding our bodies as essential to honoring God. In our bodies we flourish as we live for God's glory. Our bodies are not just for us. They are for God's purposes. Through our bodies we bear fruit that grows on the vine of Jesus Christ.

Second, if we're going to steward our bodies wisely, we need God's grace. Many of us feel shame when it comes to how we are living (and not living) in matters of physical and mental health. Maybe we're doing things we know aren't the best or we're not doing things we know we should be

doing. *No matter the details of our individual situation, we need God's grace to free us, embrace us, and empower us to live well.* Right living is a response to the love and grace of God poured out through Jesus Christ. It's evidence of God's presence in us through the Holy Spirit.

Third, if we're going to steward our bodies wisely, we need each other. Trying to steward our bodies by ourselves is difficult if not impossible, especially in a culture that often works against us. *We who are sisters and brothers in the family of God can help each other to care for and use our bodies well.* How? We can listen sensitively to each other, sharing in both joys and sorrows. We can offer support, prayer, accountability, grace, and Christ-like love. We can make plans to walk together or play pickle ball. We can drive each other to doctor's appointments. We can pray for each other concerning our physical health. Friends, if we're going to steward our bodies for God's glory, then we need each other. We need, as you've heard before, "Relationships! Relationships! Relationships!"

Let me close this talk by saying with this prayer. May God help you to live in community with other followers of Jesus so that you might help each other steward well the gifts of your bodies, which are truly temples of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Personally, I can relate to all three groups I've just described, the "doing well," the "struggling," and the "shame" groups. Plus, I know there are many other feelings we bring to this conversation as well.

² Years ago, Jack LaLanne illustrated the "Superman" narrative. He was a physical fitness phenom who, for example, at age 70 [swam one mile](#) in chilly ocean water with his hands and feet shackled while towing 70 rowboats, one for each year of his life.

³ When we're young, we can often imagine that our bodies are eternal. In the classic words of Herman Melville, "Youth is immortal; 'Tis the elderly only grow old!"³ As we grow older, we learn otherwise.

⁴ My weight lifting change.

⁵ • Moses and Aaron, who were 80 and 83 when they first approached Pharaoh (Exod 7:7)

⁶ (Rom 8:24-25; 1 Cor 15:50-57).

⁷ Our hope for the future energizes us to live productively and meaningfully today because we know that "in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58).

⁸ Our culture teaches us that our bodies belong to us. They exist to do our will, to enable our own personal fulfillment and pleasure. Scripture teaches us that our bodies belong to the Lord. They are temples of the Holy Spirit, dedicated to God's purposes and glory.

⁹ Biomedical gerontologist Aubrey de Grey made news a few years ago by claiming, "The first person to live to be 1,000 years old is alive today." But most serious scientists believe that [150 years is the upper limit for human life](#). Many are working on helping us get up into the big numbers.

¹⁰ ([Jeanne Calment](#), the oldest documented person in recent times, who lived to 122 years, smoked regularly until she was 117. She had good genes!)

¹¹ See “[Optimizing aging: A call for a new narrative](#)” in *American Psychologist*; “[Longevity Increased by Positive Self-Perceptions of Aging](#),” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

¹² For example, I did a search of books at Amazon on “healthy aging” (without quotes) and came up with 40,000 results.

¹³ (See “[How much physical activity do older adults need?](#)” from the CDC website and “[Walking, other exercise helps seniors stay mobile, independent](#),” *Harvard Health*.)

¹⁴ (“[Exercise after age 70](#),” *Harvard Health*)

¹⁵ For more information, see the NCOA web page “Exercise and Fitness for Older Adults,” <https://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/exercise-fitness>.

If you want to exercise regularly, pay attention to what helps you. My wife, for example, prefers to exercise with others. I’d rather be by myself so I can focus or read. Some folks do best in the morning, others later in the day. You may want to join a gym, or even get a trainer.

Alternatively, you may prefer to be outside when you exercise, going for a hike or playing tennis. The more you are doing things you enjoy, the more you’ll be inclined to stick with them

¹⁶ For example, a couple of months ago an article appeared in *US News* with this intriguing headline: “Want to Avoid Dementia? Add Some Color to Your Plate,” *US News*, July

29, 2021 (<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-07-29/want-to-avoid-dementia-add-some-color-to-your-plate>). The article reported on

¹⁷. “[Long-term Dietary Flavonoid Intake and Subjective Cognitive Decline in US Men and Women](#)”

¹⁸ For more information, see “Healthy Eating” on NIA website: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/healthy-eating> or “Diet and Nutrition for Older Adults” on the NCOA website (<https://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/diet-nutrition>).

¹⁹, “When Thinner Isn’t Better”

(<https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-2019/weight-concerns-after-80.html>). For more information, see: “Achieving a Healthy Weight: Your Options After 60,” <https://www.ncoa.org/article/achieving-a-healthy-weight-your-options-after-60>.

²⁰ For more guidance, see: “Quitting Smoking for Older Adults,” <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/quitting-smoking-older-adults>.

²¹ For more information, see the National Institute of Aging’s “Facts About Aging and Alcohol,” <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/facts-about-aging-and-alcohol>.

²² For more information, see the National Institute on Aging information: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/good-nights-sleep>.

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²⁴ In this season of my life, I've returned to a spiritual discipline from my youth: memorizing Scripture. Ironically, I'm doing this in a time of life when my brain isn't as good at memorizing as it was fifty years ago. But, in addition to helping me grow deeper in my faith, memorizing portions of the Bible is indeed exercising my brain, even pushing me beyond my comfort zone.

²⁵ https://greensboro.com/life/laughter-really-is-the-best-medicine-in-many-ways-thats-no-joke/article_6ef47748-8f13-5267-b0c3-980a3077627f.html

For example, there's an article from a Korean academic journal entitled, "[Therapeutic Benefits of Laughter in Mental Health: A Theoretical Review](#)" (*The Tohoku Journal of Experimental Medicine*, 2016).

From Norway, we hear from Sven Svebak, professor emeritus at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, who has studied the health impact of humor for 50 years. [Professor Svebak said](#), "A friendly sense of humor will bless you with better social relations as well as coping skills, and the reduced risk of dying early." The [Mayo Clinic encourages laughter](#) for folks of all ages who are in need of stress relief. So, if you want to flourish in the

third third of life, laugh! Crack up! Chuckle! Howl with
glee!