

Series: *KILLING ME SOFTLY*—March 4, 2007

**LENGTHENING THE DASH BETWEEN THE DATES
1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

I. INTRO

- A. When I was a kid, I loved building plastic models. One of my favorites was this model of a dragboat--which is basically a flat boat with a huge engine in it, pipes, super-charger, airscoop. But one day, I started outgrowing all these models. I decided to give my dragboat to the son of some really good friends—Billy.

-One day when I visited them, I asked about the model—which I had spent so much time building and painting. Billy’s Mom sheepishly showed me the boat. Billy, the little animal, had ripped the engine out and the propeller off to play with it in the bathtub! I smiled politely, but thought to myself, **Is NOTHING sacred?** I thought the little ankle-biter would treasure my work of art!

1. There are times when I wonder if God looks at how we treat our bodies--and feels the way I did about Billy ripping apart the dragboat I had spent so much time making.
2. If you have any doubts about how amazing your body is--this living, pulsing, flexible, growing thing--totally irreplaceable—you ought to do a little research. It’s **amazing**. Really!. We’re getting pretty good at patching the old parts--or at least helping them heal. But there’s not a scientist in our world who can create a single living cell. And our body is made up of **billions and billions** of them.
3. The body is an amazing sophisticated work of art. It’s wired with thousands of miles of nerves and blood vessels--all grown from the union of two cells, fed with milk, Shreddies, hamburgers and bananas. It has it's own built-in heating, air-conditioning, plumbing, and computer system.
-It's sensitive--yet resilient; it's vulnerable to invasive viruses, bacteria, bruises, rogue cells, and yet can mend almost anything if given half the chance.

- B. But it gets better—or worse, depending on how you look at things. We are **more** than just flesh and blood; this multi-colored, multi-layered, sophisticated machine.

1. We are **emotional** beings—affected by love, hate, apathy—transfixed by the beauty of a mountain or song; stopped in our tracks by feelings of being unloved or unwanted. And sometimes we’re on steroids by both being in love—or feelings of revenge and anger. And our emotions affect **everything** about how our body functions.
2. And there’s **more**. A brain, a mind that thinks, assimilates information; that can be intrigued; that figures out taxes, relational issues and solves problems—even while we’re sleeping.

-And, of course, the silent invisible part of us; our soul. The part that senses the presence of God; the part of us most deeply affected by sin and guilt and rebellion, as well as forgiveness and meaning and grace and hope. The part of us that chooses to love—when the mind says we shouldn’t or can’t.

3. In this series of messages, ***Killing Me Softly***, I want to talk in some very practical ways about finding healthier ways to live; about how to deal with the stuff that, to be honest, is ***killing us***—but doing it in soft, subtle ways. Sucking us into lifestyles, habits and soul sickness that can do unbelievable damage—stuff that can destroy our health and our joy and even our souls.
-Our body, emotions, minds and souls are ***amazing*** gifts. Really. And God has made it clear that we are to take care of them—just like we would take care of our children or our money. And I’m the ***only*** one on this planet who can do that for ***me!*** Same with ***you!***
4. My prayer is that at the end of this series everyone here will find at least ***one*** way that they take better care of one of God’s most magnificent gifts: ***You!***

II. GOD CARES ABOUT YOUR BODY...

- A. Did you know that God cares ***deeply*** about how you treat yourself—and how you take care of yourself? Let me tell you how I know that. One day Jesus, Son of God, was confronted by a group of religious professionals who asked him what the most important commandments of the Bible were. Listen to what He said:

Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these (Mark 12:29-31 NLT).”

-At another juncture, he commented that ***all*** of what the Bible has to say about life hangs on these two commands.

1. Let’s explore what Jesus is saying here at the surface level. The no-brainer on this is that ***love*** is at the basis of everything and every relationship. But look at ***how*** we are to love.
-First—love God. Notice ***how*** it says to love Him. With all your ***heart***, with all your ***soul***, with all your ***mind***, and with all your ***strength***. Did you notice the four topics we’re going to deal with in this series? In case you didn’t—we’re going to talk about health for your body—or ***strength***, your emotions, or your ***heart***, your mind, and your soul.

Ultimately, anything we offer back to God is produced by those four areas of life. And we can only ***offer*** something if we ***have*** something to give. And God deserves our very best.

-Something else I want to point out. A human is not four silos—heart, soul, mind, strength. We are ***whole*** persons—and being healthy in 2 or 3 or these areas won’t work, because they all affect each other. The health of your soul will affect your emotional and physical health. The health of your mind will affect you emotionally and physically and spiritually. Kill off your body? Well, th-th-that’s all folks!

2. Second, Jesus said to ***love your neighbor***. So—***how*** do you show love to them? Well—you love them...***as yourself***.

-Now, think for just a minute about some of the things that might mean. I think it would mean that we should **respect** and show **kindness** to other people, right? Show **kindness** to them; **accept** and **value** them. And it **definitely** means you don't poison them, run over them, interrupt their sleep—do **anything** that would send them to an early grave. And, according to the Good Samaritan story, it also means helping them become healthy again when they're sick.

-Can you see where I'm going with this? According to what Jesus is saying here, how can you possibly love others if you have contempt for yourself--or are slowly killing yourself? If some of us actually treated others like we are currently treating ourselves, we'd get charged with murder or aggravated assault!

B. Down through the years—and especially in our day—all kinds of weirdness has surrounded how people have treated their bodies. Most of this stuff falls into two categories.

1. The first is to **devalue the body**. To in essence say, “You know, it's **just** the container I live in.” And this stuff goes back a **long** way. It actually made it's way into Christianity—to the point where most human physical desires were seen as evil. And, predictably, this led to asceticism—where suffering and deprivation became, **in and of themselves**, more spiritual than health. And it led to people doing very strange things—like Simon Stylites who lived for years on top of a 60 foot pillar. Paul the Apostle, had to finally address it:

“Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!” Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires (Col. 2:21-23 NLT).

-Some of you may have been raised in families where it was implied that your body was something to be ashamed of; that sexuality was dirty. Evil. And that's simply not true.

2. Now, how many of you would say, “Wow, **that** would be the problem here in North America! We just don't pay **enough** attention to our bodies!” I'd say it's living as if life is **all** about our bodies.

-Now, think about how bizarre this gets. We pay a group of people a **lot** of money to alternately exercise and starve and focus on their bodies 24/7. We call them **models**. And we hire them to advertise both **fast food...and exercise equipment—like the Ab-Rocker, the Ab Roller, the Ab-Flex, the Abslide, the Ab Sculptor, the Ab Works, the Ab Trainer—and it can be YOURS for only \$39.95—get your credit card ready so you can order yours today!**

-It gets weirder. We then **compare** ourselves to air-brushed, re-touched **photographs** of these people—and feel inferior. Friends—this is **ab-normal**—and it creates a **lot** of pain. You can become obsessed about the exterior of your body, comparing it to someone who doesn't even **exist!** This has created an **epidemic** of brokenness.

I took a glance through some recent statistics. 27% of Ontario girls, age 12-18, are engaged in **severely** problematic food and weight behavior. The annual death

rate associated with anorexia is **12X** higher than the death rate due to all other causes in females between 15 and 24 years old.

3. The other detour, as I see it, is with people who are **health obsessed**. This may be you. Whether it's food or exercise or air or vitamins or germs—you obsess on this, talk about it, nag about it 24/7. And it probably creates conflict with friends and family. Physical fitness can, like anything, get perverted into self-obsession. You may be the healthiest person on your block—and be too busy being healthy to love anyone beside yourself. Be careful, because you may actually outlive your friendships before you outlive your friends!

III. ...SO YOU SHOULD CARE, TOO!

- A. What I want to do, if you'll allow me, is give some solid biblical principles for loving your body appropriately—and then, hopefully, some very practical suggestions. How does that sound?

-When it comes to your health, how **do** you see your body? Are you satisfied with it—basically? What do you believe when it comes to taking care of it? God has some very wise things to say about this. The Bible, actually, is the **Owner's Manual** for the body.

1. The first thing God would want you to know and **believe** is that your body is God's gift to you. And it's a good gift. Listen to Psalm 139:

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it (Psalm 139:13-14 NLT).

-Can you say those words and **mean** them? **Your workmanship is marvelous!** I have things about myself that I don't like—feel insecure about. Can anyone identify? But there comes a point where you have to accept what you've been given to work with before you can be healthy.

-Like--what are the options? How can you ever love others if you're jealous; envious; and despise yourself? And how can you love God if your ticked cause He didn't make you like someone else?

-Your body may not be God's gift to women—or God's gift to men—but it **is** God's gift to **you!** It might help to think about it like this: "Having **my** body is better than not having one at all."

2. Another thing that will affect how you take care of your body is **Who** you see yourself as belonging to. A number of years ago, I saw a vacation postcard that read, **My body isn't a temple; it's an AMUSEMENT PARK."**

-Well, the Bible says

...Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body (1 Cor. 6:19-20 NLT).

-What does the world system we live in say? "Do what you **want** with your body! It's **yours!**"

But when you've given your life to Jesus—guess who you belong to? Him! He paid for you! Your body is the place where He lives—and is to be treated with **R-E-S-P-E-C-T!**

- a. The Bible actually has some amazing things to say about keeping your body healthy. God gave dietary and cleanliness laws to his people long before **anyone** knew anything about germs and contagion and amoebas. In fact, it's in the context of God telling these people how to live healthy lives that He reveals Himself as Jehovah Rapha—**the Lord who heals you!**
- b. Specifically, God told them not to eat pork, carrion-eating birds, shellfish, and bottom-feeding fish. Think about the pork thing, for example. Anyone here want to eat rare pork? Why not. Something called *trichinosis*. All **kinds** of bad stuff can happen if you aren't careful with shellfish. And birds that eat dead stuff? I don't even want to **go** there!
-The regulations he gave dealt with washing dishes, washing hands before you ate, throwing out mildewed clothes, not living in houses with mold, burying excrement—this is all **extremely** practical stuff. Brilliant. And God clearly tells the Israelites to not eat the **fat** of an animal but burn it as an offering to Him. Hmmm! Makes sense **now** doesn't it!
- c. God, as healer, is apparently interested in **preventative** medicine—helping us have the wisdom and self-discipline to prevent problems.
- 3 The guidelines on exercise are not as noticeable—mainly because to **live** in that culture was to exercise. It is interesting, though, though that Paul uses a lot of athletic imagery in his writings. He talked about boxing, exercising, running races—and discipline.
- But He does say this to Timothy, his understudy,
Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in this life and the next (1 Tim. 4:8 NLT)
The word Paul uses for **physical exercise** is the word, *gymnazo*. Guess what English word comes from that? **Gymnasium**. This was a **big** deal in the Greek culture—you know, with the Olympic games and all.
- He says, "There is some value in this--going to the gym, keeping your body in shape, doing sit-ups, push-ups.
At another point, Paul tells people that he makes his body **his** servant. That's a great perspective. We are not on this planet to serve our bodies; we are here to serve God—and help our bodies be good servants to us by taking care of them. The point is to train your body to do **what** it needs to do **when** it needs to be done—and not poop out on you when you hit 65.
4. There's another really important principle to understand when it comes to health. It may surprise you. It's sexual purity. God's given very specific guidelines on this. Sexual activity is to be kept within the boundaries of a man and woman bound together in a faithful marriage. Imagine what would happen to the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases in our world if we did what God says to do? The Bible says this:
Our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies...Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality

is a sin against your own body. Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit [not an amusement park!] (1 Cor. 6:13b, 18-19 NLT).

-Now, you can blow this off, rationalize why this applies to everyone else except **you**, but there is a price for immorality. If you defy God, this stuff will affect every area of your life in destructive ways. Know why? Cause invented both our bodies and sex--and **that's** how He set it up!

5. Another biblical principles covers a lot of gray areas. It's actually found in the same chapter I just read from. It goes like this:

'I am allowed to do anything.' But I reply, 'Not everything is good for you.' And even though, 'I am allowed to do anything, 'I must not become a slave to anything (1 Cor. 6:12 NLT).'

-I think this principle fits anything that has the potential to harm your health longterm: Cigarettes, alcohol, being a couch potato, prescription drugs, diet pills, laxatives, driving fast, eating fast food, and raising teens. Just kidding on the last one.

-Now the Bible is clear on the damage abusing alcohol can do—and it speaks to the issue of gluttony. But what about people who say, "I can I do this and not have Jesus throw me out of his family, can't I?" Paul says, "We are saved by the grace not performance. But why **would** you want to defy God if it's not good for you—and lures you into slavery? That's just being stupid! Is that really what you want for your life?"

-And the answer would be...? **No!** Any addiction is a thief that will steal your money, your freedom, and eventually—your life.

6. Can I give you one more principle? Let me read a verse, first, so you know where I'm going.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by *changing* the way you *think* (Rom. 12:2 NLT).

-Don't get caught in our culture's obsession with the body. It's a trap. Let me ask a question. Anyone here have a perfect body--like you'd model for Mr. or Miss or Ms. Universe? How many of you are **almost** there? How many of you **were** there? Did you know that even those who win awards and have endless pictures taken--aren't satisfied with their bodies!

And even if they are—just **wait!** I don't care if you're Jane Fonda or not, time and gravity have a way of dragging **everything** toward the floor! Don't get obsessed with the exterior and what other people think about it.

-And this passage tells us the alternative. **Present your body to God as an act of worship!** Say, "God—here it is. It ain't much--but it's **yours**. All of it. Hair—or lack there-of. Eyes. Hands. Legs. Feet—and even the parts I don't want to talk about. Help me care for it—treat it like a temple **You** live in. Help me treat it like a good gift.

Use it to love you and others. And help me to think in **new** ways so I can accept the body you've given me."

- B. What I want to do with our remaining time is just give you some helpful information I've come across that may help you lengthen the dash between the dates. Are you interested? One disclaimer. This is just a finger pointing in what I believe is the right direction. For *real* help, you'll have to do your own research.

-Confession time. How many of you would say that others see you as a healthy, maybe even somewhat athletic person? Raise your hands. I was at a seminar recently with about 25 pastors put on by Jack Groppel—the author of *The Corporate Athlete*. He asked us the same question in a questionnaire—and something like 70% of this group said their people saw them as healthy, athletic people. He chuckled and said, “Come on, people! According to what you've told me about your health practices, only about 10% of you actually are!” We **do** tend to over-rate ourselves!

1. Now, you need to know that Jesus never even suggested a health program or diet plan for his followers. He never said, “Do this—you'll *live* longer and *feel* better. He *did* say, “The body is **more** than food or clothes.”
 - Want to know what I think? I think there are a **lot** of scams out there on vitamins, exercise equipment and diets. Let me give you some stats:
 - Every year North Americans will spend 2 **billion** on home exercise equipment—most of which is now being used to hang clothes on in their bedrooms
 - And we'll spend **another 3 billion** in health club memberships—many of which go unused after the first month or two.
 - And this is the one that gets me. Over 50 million of us will go on diets and spend **30 billion** on weight-control products, most of which don't last. We compare ourselves to the people on the ads for this stuff—who are usually younger and exercise for a **living**. Then we see the ads on TV, “It's almost bikini season...!” And there are some common sense, non-expensive ways to stay healthy.

2. I'd have to say that there have been several factors through the years that motivated me to change my habits. One was getting rid of some back and hip pain through an exercise program recommended by a chiropractor. Another was shaving off my beard in university and finding another chin! I realized then that there were some people in the world that could eat anything they wanted and not gain an ounce—and I wasn't one of them!
 - If you would talk to Lori—she'd tell you that when we first met, I was a little weird about eating roughage and whole wheat/unbleached flour—and no fried foods. To the point where my snacks in my seminary dorm room were prunes, raisins, stuff made with bran and carrots. It got me in trouble one day. I had been on a roughage binge the night before—and then ate greasy sausages from the school for brunch. By 2 p.m., I was rolling on the floor begging Jesus to take me home.
 - But my biggest wake-up call was when my Dad had by-pass surgery. I did the math. “Hmmm! His Dad died at 47, he started having heart problems at 57—I'd **better start running for my life!** At first I played racquet ball—then I started running. And I've been pretty faithful at it.
 - The most recent influence has been a guy names Jack Groppel—and the book he's written. *The Corporate Athlete*. What I've totally respected about him is his

record in training athletes—plus the fact that what he says makes sense, is based on solid research—and is **doable** for normal people! His emphasis isn't on 6 pack abs and killer buns—but on overall health and energy.

-There's something else I really, really like. You don't have to join a health club and buy a bunch of expensive health food. It's very basic, common sense stuff! Now, I want to give some **very** basic information without this becoming **Oprah** stuff, okay? Most of this is just common sense.

3. Now, the stats on how we eat are pretty raw.

In one year, the average North American will consume:

***45 large bags of potato chips**

***120 orders of French fries (15 kg!)**

***190 candy bars**

***120 desserts**

***150 slices of pizza**

***And who *knows* how much coffee and donuts Canadians consume!**

One of the issues I had to face was eating breakfast. I used to **pride** myself in not eating breakfast and not eating between meals—thinking that **not** eating would burn fat. And that's not true.

Apparently, what helps burn fat is eating the right kinds of foods in the right quantities—and managing energy for our bodies and brains. **That's** a good thing, right? Apparently when we don't eat, we are communicating a message to our body, "**No food available! Store fat!**" That simple understanding helped me.

-Again, this research is saying that you have to be careful **what** you eat and **how often** you eat. Anyone here know how pythons eat? They eat a whole pig, and then lay around for a couple of weeks, barely able to drag themselves around. Then they search for **another** pig. That's normal for pythons—not humans. Eating a whole pig in one sitting isn't good for us humans!

*One other learning. Did you know it takes 15 minutes for the stomach to signal the brain and say, "**Hey! There's ENOUGH down here!**"

*One more important thing. Drinking water. A lot of it. Friends, I learned this the hard way by having two kidney stones! I now have this humiliating path in the carpet from my office door to the bathroom! But it's better than a kidney stone.

4. Groppe also addresses the issue of exercise. Now, that's nothing new, is it. But sometimes when people hear the word **exercise** they hear, **club membership, special tight clothes, one hour a day**

-Here's the deal. To get exercise find something you enjoy that **fits** your budget and your schedule. Not TV. Something simple we all can do is just **walk**. Fast! And you can even do that in the winter. That's why God made shopping malls! Start small. Start where you are. Have someone hold you accountable until you can create a **new** rut!

-And you don't need a club membership and personal trainer to build muscle tone. I take about 10 minutes, morning and afternoon, and do some push-ups and sit-ups. If you walk past my office and hear grunting and heavy breathing—there's nothing obscene going on—I'm just exercising. Has it given me 6 pack abs? Well,

you're just going to have to wonder about that, aren't you! Like I've often said—my concern is not dying; it's **half**-dying!

5. One final thing. Rest. Sleep. We live in a world that is **chronically** sleep deprived. We GTA-ers are notorious for thinking we can cheat ourselves on sleep, get more done and stay healthy. It won't happen. The Bible says,

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves (Psalm 127:2 NIV).

-There are a few exceptions—but research says that most of us need about 8 hours of sleep a night. Period. Did you know that sleep deprivation compromises your immune system and increases your risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes, obesity and depression? God has set up life to follow a rhythm. Sleep, work, relax. Sleep, work, relax.

-If you get your rest, not only does it keep you healthier—it leaves you more emotionally fit to handle life. And you get **more** done in **less** time. Friends, I know it's cool in these parts to talk about how little sleep you get and how busy you are and how early you get up—but you **can't cheat the sandman!**

6. Let me tell you what I think may be the biggest problem we all face. It's the brokenness that comes to our self-image and our health and our perspective on life through comparison—usually comparison with someone you can never be—because **they** aren't real

-God **didn't** give you your body—so you can celebrate bikini season, turn heads, have people say, “Wow! Is **he** buff or what! Is **hot** or what!” Do you really want people making a judgment on you based on the shape and condition of your body? If you **do**, how's that going to feel you're your body is simply starting to go the way of all bodies—sag, wrinkle, bag, get spots. And you can't get enough nips and tucks and lasering and enhancements to solve that problem. Age wins!

And **all** of this comparison stuff creates incredible brokenness and hurt—and some very destructive behavior. If you're having thoughts of self-hatred, or revulsion every time you look in the mirror, or awful feelings of sadness and inferiority—you need **God's** perspective on all this. He loves you as you are, gave your body to you as a gift, and is **crazy** about you.

-God is more than happy to give you the spiritual power and inner strength to be healthy. That's His will.

But He will **not** lend His power to help you turn heads and chase some fantasy. And if that's what you want—that's not **God's** plan.

You've gotten sucked into a very destructive world system. You may need to get some help from a Christian counselor to help you get a healthy perspective on who you are and be able to say to God:

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it (Psalm 139:13-14 NLT).

IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. J. Oswald Sanders, the author of *Spiritual Leadership*, wrote about a Scottish minister named Robert Murray McCheyne, a Scottish minister who had a huge impact, but died at the early age of 29. McCheyne was apparently a workaholic who neglected his health and completely burned himself out doing ministry. On his deathbed, McCheyne uttered these words: **“The Lord gave me a horse to ride and a message to deliver. Alas, I have killed the horse and I cannot deliver the message.”**
- B. Your body is an awesome gift from God. Are you taking care of it? Maybe you need God’s help to do that. Ask for it!
- *Maybe you need grace just to accept your body for what it is--and not envy others.
 - *Maybe the **outside** of you is fine, but inside—you’re broken.
 - *Maybe you’ve seen you body as an amusement park—and not the temple of the Holy Spirit—and that needs confessed and corrected.
 - *Or maybe you’re in pain--and you need healing. So **ask!**
- The Bible says that the sensible thing, the logical thing to do--is to present your body to God. I can do that. You can do that too.