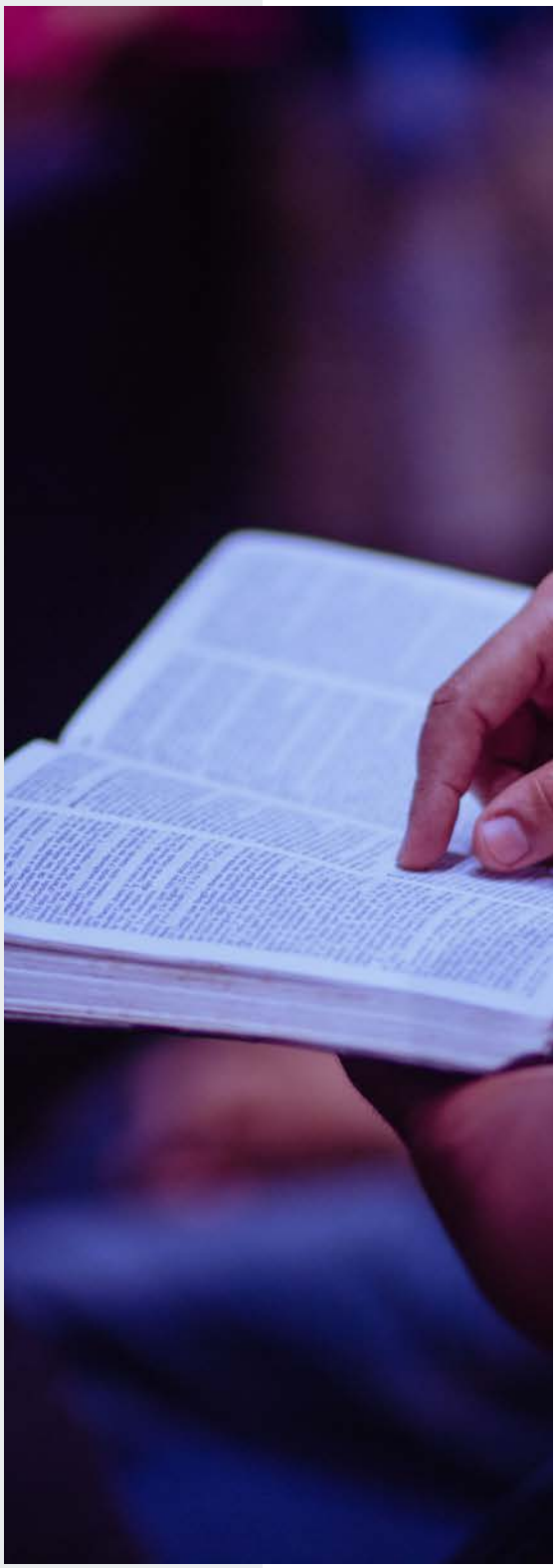
swba
south west baptist association

5 WAYS TO WELLBEING

MENTAL WELLBEING & THE BIBLE

HANNAH DENGATE

INTRODUCTION



The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are based on evidence by the New Economics Foundation in 2008. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are used widely especially within the NHS and education sectors. Each of the chapters or videos takes each aspect of the 5 ways to wellbeing and explores what the bible has to say and then leaves you with some practical challenges to try out within your families, children's and youth groups or even as a whole church family.

About the series creator: Hannah Dengate is the Wellbeing Lead at a Christian Charity called Phase based in Hitchin having previously been a youth worker in a Baptist Church for four years. Holding both an MA in Applied Theology and a BSc in Psychology in Education, and also currently studying at Kings College London. Hannah is passionate about helping young people flourish and thrive. Hannah also loves to write and has co-authored a Grove Book titled '*Building Resilience in Young People*' which will be available from June 2021.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Mental Health is much spoken of these days, but did you know that much of the advice about mental wellbeing is founded on biblical principles? Hannah Dengate (Wellbeing Lead at Phase) has written this series which seeks to join the dots between the Five Ways to Wellbeing and their biblical foundations in this series both through this booklet and also available as a short film series. Each chapter takes each of the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' in turn and offers helpful practical advice so you can put these simple but life-changing principles into practice.

This series is for anyone who wants to learn more about mental wellbeing; young people and parents, church small groups and youth groups, or can even be used as a sermon series.

To download the video's click the link.

It was great to discover a resource that intrinsically links wellbeing with our relationship with God.

Church Leader

CONNECT

CONNECT

Why is it important to Connect...?

As human beings we crave for connection with others, which is why this past year has been so difficult, as we haven't been able to connect in ways that we normally would, in spending time with friends and family. Yet social connection is so important for our physical, emotional, social, spiritual and mental wellbeing. Evidence has shown that having that close connection with others and feeling valued is a fundamental human need. Connection offers that sense of belonging, offering shared experiences with others, and having others to journey through life with who can provide support and encouragement.

As Brene Brown a well-known speaker and author on this topic said *"A deep sense of love and belonging is an irresistible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. It is part of who we are and how we function."*

Having these connections is important for our wellbeing and mental health and so it is important that we spend time investing in them. We have a number of people who we can connect with, whether that's our family, friends, work colleagues, our neighbours and community, those we are living with within our households, our church family, and most importantly God.

CONNECT

What does the Bible tell us about connecting?

It makes total sense that connection is a fundamental human need, because we have a God who is a relational God, a God who wants us to be in relationship with him and others. Throughout scripture the theme of relationships is demonstrated. We were designed for connecting with one another, by a God who himself in very nature loves connection. This connection is displayed fully in the trinity which models an understanding of relationships. God exists as three distinct persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), yet one God.

As we read in 1 John 4 verse 8, God is Love, and God loves it when we spend time with him, like any relationship, the more we spend time with a person, the more we get to know them. We cannot thrive and flourish alone; we need relationships and we have been created to be connected, by our creator, to our surroundings and those around us, and at the centre of us is the desire and capacity to connect. And as we connect and support one another it has a powerful impact upon our wellbeing and resilience.

We can connect with God through different ways, whether that is through his word, by being creative, in prayer or being out in creation, I know for me God speaks so powerfully through the outdoors and nature, whether that is through a sunset, a rainbow, or the power of the waves. For others it may be through people, or in the silence of studying God's word, writing, or through art and photography. Whatever, it is let's take time to connect to God.

At the moment it is simple things that can make a real difference to us and help us feel connected to others around us, and it is so important to 'check in' with those around us to see how they are doing.

CONNECT: CHALLENGE PAGE

Challenge 1

Write a letter of encouragement or draw a picture and send it to someone to encourage them.

Challenge 2

Connect with a friend my either sending them a message or speaking to them on the phone.

Challenge 3

Find a bible app that you can complete either individually, with a friend, as a family or a youth group to help you connect with one another as well as with God.

I thank my God every time I think of you

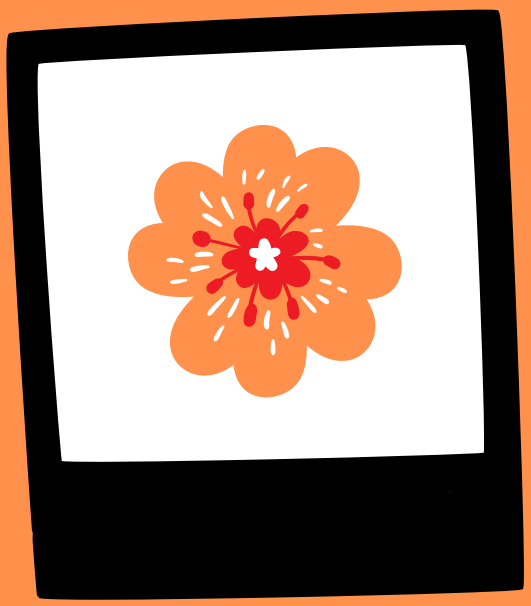
CONNECT: REFLECTION PAGE

What does it look like for you to connect with God?

How can you connect with others this coming week?

Space for your own personal reflections...

TAKE NOTICE



TAKE NOTICE

Why is it important to Take Notice?

There are four things that I want to focus on when it comes to taking notice and they are:

1. Taking notice of our emotions
2. Taking notice of what is and isn't in our control,
3. Taking notice of the things we can be thankful for
4. Taking Notice when we need to take time to rest

1. Taking notice of our emotions

It is important to take notice and acknowledge the emotions that we are feeling. An important part of building our own personal resilience is recognising and acknowledging these emotions.

We see in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus acknowledged his feelings of distress, where Jesus went with his disciples, after the last supper and where he would be betrayed the night before his crucifixion. Jesus knew what lay ahead for him, the betrayal, and the weight that was upon him.

Jesus says to his disciples, *My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*

Jesus, fully human and fully divine in nature, knows what it is to feel, a full array of emotions. In these moments at the garden, Jesus is expressing and pouring out his heart to his father. Although not always easy, it is important to acknowledge and take notice of these emotions and thoughts and be honest with ourselves, others around us and most importantly God.

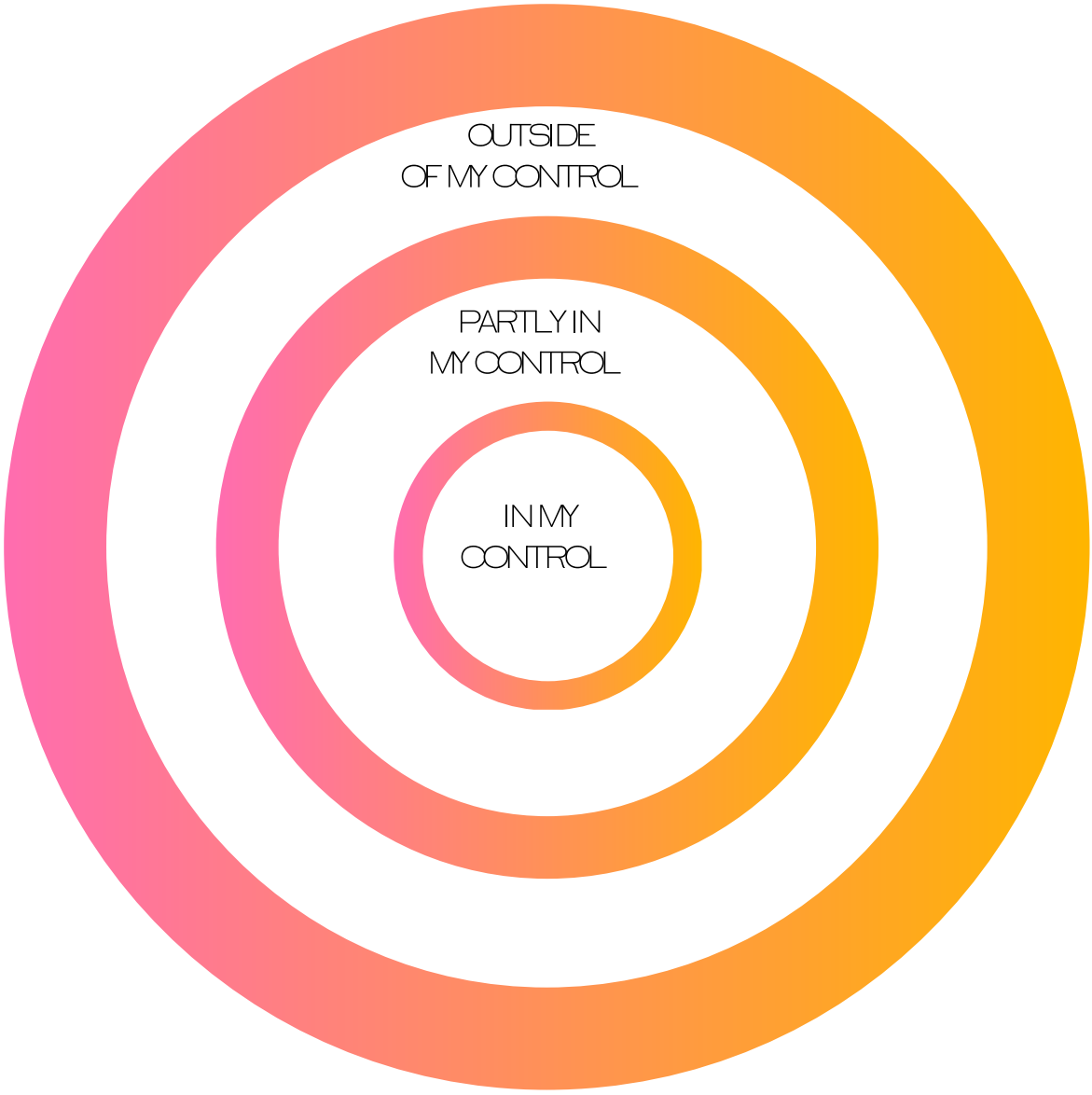
With children and young people, it is important to create a safe space for them to be able to process and express different emotions, to name them and not be afraid of their emotions. It is important to listen and validate, not making assumptions. It is also important to recognise that you don't have to have the answers or pretend that you know, instead it is about being honest with them, providing a safe space in which they feel they can show vulnerability and meet them where they are at. Small things such as listening, can make a huge difference.

TAKE NOTICE

2. Taking notice of what is and isn't in our control

There are many things that we can't control but it is important to recognise the things that we can control. By doing this we are able to focus our time and energy on the things that we can control and try to let go of the thing's outside of our control. It is important to talk these things through with children and young people and help them work out what is and isn't in their control, and for what is, and how they manage and respond to the situation that they are facing.

A great resource that I use as part of my work with Phase is the Circle of Control, this helps work through the process of recognising what is and isn't in our control and focusing our energy on what is within out control. In all of this we can remember that God is in control, and whilst it is unknown to us, it is known to him. That He will be with us in all that we face.



TAKE NOTICE

3. Taking notice of what we are thankful for

When we focus on the things, we are thankful for, it starts to shift our mindset and improves our wellbeing. Taking notice of the things that we are grateful for, big or small, is a great way to thank and praise God and appreciate our surroundings.

Philippians 4:6-7:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

4. Taking notice of when we need to take time to rest

We see that Jesus often withdrew from the crowds to spend time with his father alone, to pray and to be refreshed, we too need to build that time in, to respond by spending with our father, to hear still small voice of our father whispering into our hearts. Just like Jesus we to need to protect that time.

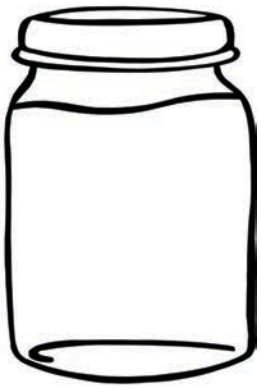
We see that after the feeding of the 5000 Jesus withdrew in Matthew 14:22-23 we read, *Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.*

Recognising those times when we just need to be still, to rest and embrace the silence and solitude is important, away from the distractions that can consume us in order to be refreshed and feel rested.

TAKE NOTICE: CHALLENGE PAGE

Challenge 1

Write down 3 things each day that you are thankful and praising God. Write them down on a post it note and put them in a jar.

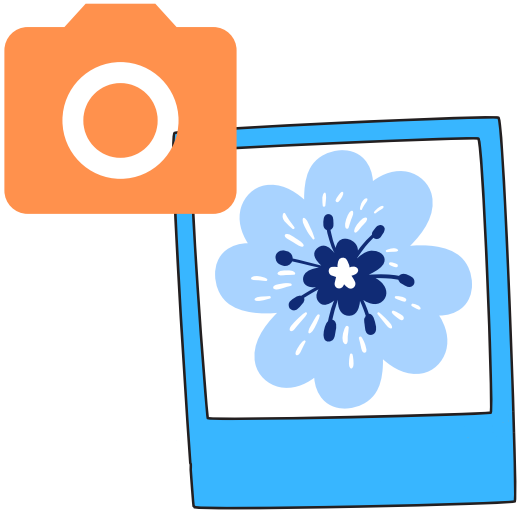


Challenge 2

Spend some time in silence, taking notice of what God is saying to you, how you are feeling and write down your thoughts.

Challenge 3

Head out on a walk and take photos as you go that make you appreciate God's creation.



Be still and know that I am God

TAKE NOTICE: REFLECTION PAGE

Which of four aspects of take notice stood out to you and why?

Write down three things that you are thankful today…

Space for your own personal reflections…

GIVE

GIVE

Why is it important to Give?

Helping others can have a positive effect on our own mental health and wellbeing. Baking a cake, sending a surprise present in the post, helping around the house, giving your time. These are just some of the ways that we can give and show kindness to those around us.

It has been found that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing. I love the book the boy, the mole, the fox and the horse by Charlie Mackesy. The book has some powerful illustrations, including, *"Nothing beats kindness, It sits quietly beyond all things."*

Evidence suggests that helping others promote wellbeing of all ages and can be particularly important to the development of social cognition in children and young people. When we give to others, it can help us to feel part of something much bigger and helps to give a sense of purpose, focusing on the needs of others.

Dr. Gary Chapman (author of the New York Times bestseller and pastor) presents a simple truth: *relationships grow better when we understand each other.* There has never been a time when we have needed to understand our friends and family better, especially those that we are living with. Gary explains that everyone gives and receives love differently. These ways of expressing and receiving love are called the 5 Love Languages and include the following: Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch.

Love languages can be applied to all relationships whether that's within a marriage, your relationship with your children, teenagers, friends and colleagues. It is how we can show those around us that they are valued, appreciated and loved, and understanding the way in which that is going to be communicated the most effectively and received.For each of us there is at least one language that we prefer and will often give out off. I encourage you to have a go at the short quiz, complete it as a family or as a group of friends, a youth group and share your results, so you can show those around you that they are valued, appreciated and loved.

GIVE

What does the Bible say?

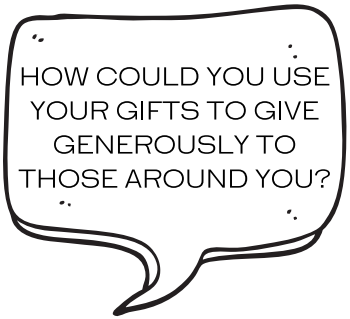
Matthew 22: 37-39:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

God calls us to love those around us with compassion, generosity and kindness, to be his and hands and feet, to love our neighbour, whether that is physically the person next door to us or in the more general sense of others we know, our family, friends, church family, the person on the counter at Tesco's, teachers. We are called to show God's love with those we interact with. We often don't know the difference that we can make, even just a smile or a word of encouragement as you get your food shopping can make a difference.

God has given us all different skills, talents, and gifts to be able to serve and be a blessing to those around us. Maybe you love to cook or bake, you are great practically, you are creative, or you just bring that encouragement through words. God gives us these good gifts, however small we might feel they are, not that we might cling onto them tightly but that we may share them with others, and as we do this it shows the heart of our father to others, his love, power and advances his kingdom. As we give to others and show them love through this and by our actions, we are imitating God's love and the love that He has for us. As 1 John 4:19 says We love because God first loved us.

If we read the well-known account of Jesus feeding the 5000, we see the boy gave his 2 fish and 5 loaves. He gave all he had, yet God blessed it and from his giving, fed 5000 people. When we allow God to use the gifts, he has given us, and generously give to others, he can bless that. As we read in Acts 20: 35 "It's more blessed to give than receive."



GIVE: CHALLENGE PAGE

Challenge 1

Complete the love languages quiz to work out what your love languages are.

Kindness Token

Challenge 2

How can you give generously?
Write a Kindness token for something you can do for someone else and carry that act of kindness out during the week.

Challenge 3

Think about how you could help your neighbour or your wider community.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself

GIVE: REFLECTION PAGE

What gifts do you recognise that God has given you and how could you use them to bless others around you?

What does it look like for you to 'love your neighbour as yourself'?

Space for your own personal reflections...

BE ACTIVE

BE ACTIVE

Why is it important to Be Active?

Being active means anything that we do in our daily lives that involves moving our bodies.Going for a walk or a run, cycling, dancing, an exercise class are all ways to be active. Regular physical activity is associated with a greater sense of well-being and a positive impact upon our mental health.

Jo Wicks has become the nation's PE teacher and he says:*"Exercise is essential for your mental health."* Being active helps us to be able to cope better with stress, by stimulating positive endorphins, increases self-esteem, helps us to think clearer and it can be fun and also social if we make it and when we can.

Finding time to be active can be difficult, in an already busy schedule, therefore It is important to do something that you enjoy or that you could do with your family or a friend, whether that's building in a walk, going for a bike ride, or finding a 10 minute you tube workout. Setting yourself small goals or challenges each day when it comes to being active can be helpful!

BE ACTIVE

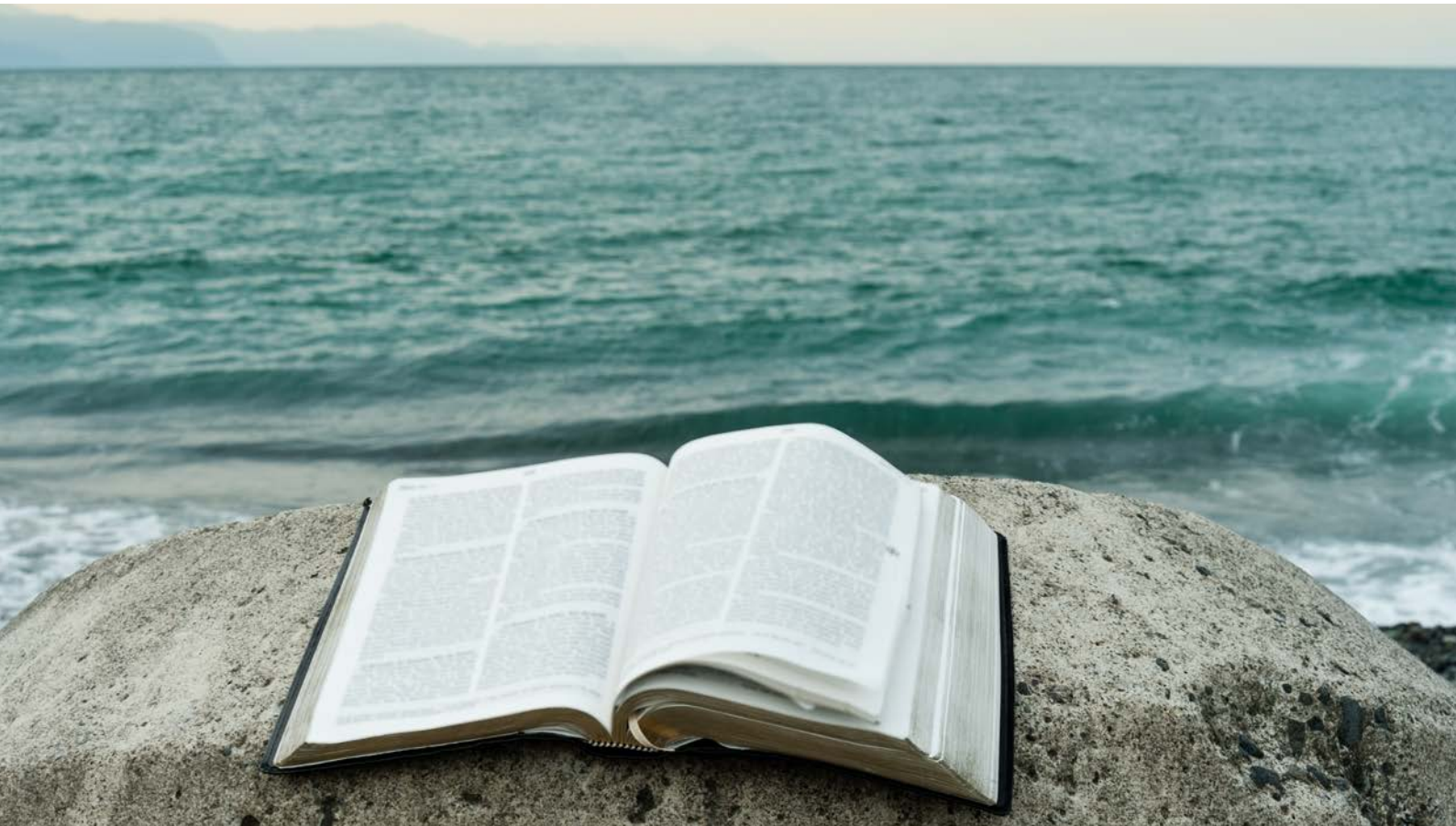
What does the Bible say?

It is important that we look after our bodies and ourselves. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples 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, honour God with your bodies.

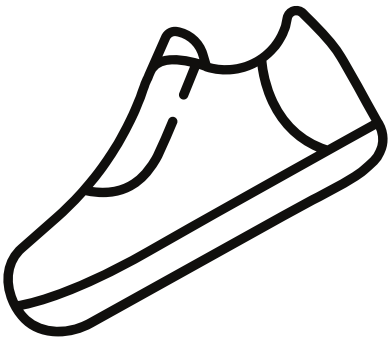
We are to take care of our bodies and we are given our bodies to do His work, within our bodies is where the Holy Spirit dwell. When we have a healthy body, it gives us the energy to do God's work.

As we read in Psalm 139, we have been fearfully and wonderfully made, knitted together in our mother's womb, God intricately put us together and cares for us, therefore we too should have this care for our bodies.



BE ACTIVE: CHALLENGE PAGE

Challenge 1



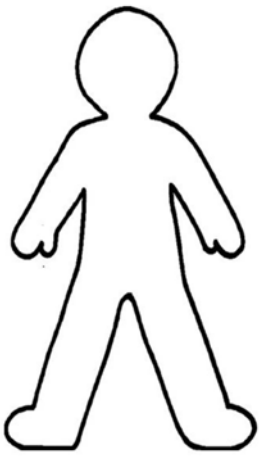
Set yourself the goal of walking 10,000 steps a day. Why not try doing it as a family or youth group? Or set yourself a goal of somewhere you want to go 'virtually' and as a group walk there...

Challenge 2

Try out a home workout such as Joe Wicks. There are a number of good ones avaliable on YouTube.

Challenge 3

When you go next out on a walk or run why not listen to a podcast or worship music.



Honour God with your bodies

BE ACTIVE: REFLECTION PAGE

What woud it look like for you to build time in to Be active?

What does it look like for you to 'take care of your body?'

Space for your own personal reflections...

KEEP LEARNING

KEEP LEARNING

Why is it important to keep learning?

Learning helps us to gain new knowledge, develop some great skills and have new experiences along the way! Learning can look like many different things, from educational, to developing a new skill, to challenging yourself to step out of your comfort zone, or as Christians learning more of God's word and who he is asking us to be.

Learning has shown to be good for both our minds and our bodies and helps improve our mental wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem as we face those challenges that perhaps we thought we couldn't do, as we learn new skills.Learning can give us a sense of hope and purpose, when you set yourself goals, and by learning and working towards these goals it has shown to increase our wellbeing. Learning is not something that has to be done in isolation but can be done as part of connecting with others, we can often learn from others also, as we grow, learn and develop.

What does the bible say?

As disciples of Jesus, we should whole-heartedly keep learning. We are called to be disciples and to learn more about what it means to follow Christ, whatever age we are. We should never feel like we have reached the top, as there is always something for us to learn, and not just absorbing more head knowledge but letting it transform our hearts. I love that God's word is alive and active. I find that whenever I read the bible, even a well-loved passage, it speaks to me in a new way, God shows me something new, or I learn something new through it, discovering more of God's character and who He is.

Proverbs 18:15 *Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights.*

As a church community we should be encouraging each other to learn what it means to become more like Christ, and who he has called us to be. One of the great things I love about a church family is just that, it is a family, which means there is so much opportunity to learn from one another. I have always valued being able to have those who are older and wiser than me, who I have been able to learn from and that is so valuable. Nurturing these intergenerational relationships is so important.

KEEP LEARNING: CHALLENGE PAGE

Challenge 1

Spend time reading your bible each day. Maybe try choosing a book of the bible and reading through it either by yourself or with family or friends.

Challenge 2

Have a chat with someone or arrange for someone from your church family to come to speak at your youth group about their faith journey.

Challenge 3

Keep learning something that you enjoy e.g. dancing, music, art, reading, sport.

Wise men and women are always learning

KEEP LEARNING: REFLECTION PAGE

Who is someone you can learn from?

What is something that you are learning at the moment?

Space for your own personal reflections...

FURTHER READING

Further reading and useful sites:

5 Love Languages
https://www.5lovelanguages.com/5-love-languages/

Grove Books
https://grovebooks.co.uk

New Economics Foundation Report
https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/five-ways-to-wellbeing-1.pdf

Mind - 5 Ways to Wellbeing
https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/

Mind and Soul Foundation
https://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org

Phase Hitchin
https://phase-hitchin.org/resources

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