

LIVING WELL: 5 CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LIFE AND DISCERNMENT

LIVING WELL: WEEK THREE

Soul | Mind | Body | Strength |
| Heart |

“Wellness is a popular topic these days... So why is there a need for one more book about wellness? Because this book approaches wellness from a unique perspective – focusing on the integration of wellness and Christian Spirituality.”

The concept of living well in thought, word and deed is central to this book. Our thoughts, words, and deeds are all interrelated, each part affecting the others. Our thoughts influence our words and deeds. And our deeds, our actions, shape our thoughts and words. [...] Each section closes with a “Thought, Word and Deed section”. Take some time to reflect on the questions, journaling if necessary, to help you clarify. Then reflect on whether you might be called to **do** something different (in thought, word or deed) moving forward.

“There is a saying from the twelve-step movement that we have to ‘do different, to get different.’” The intention of this study is to help you reflect on your current way of doing things, in order to “get different.”

“The reality is that each of us already has a ‘living’ compass. Each of us has a compass that is directing and guiding the day-to-day decisions we make in our lives, whether we know it or not. Our compass is a combination of our beliefs, thoughts, core values, self-identity, passions, and ideals, and is always orienting our lives and daily decisions.

This series is designed to help you reflect on the compass or compasses that are orienting you in eight areas of wellness. IN each of these areas you will be invited to reflect on which compass is guiding the choices and decisions you make. [...] After you reflect on [what is] guiding your decisions, you will be asked to consider the impact on your well-being.” Is this what God wants for you? What you want for you?

- Scott Stoner (p.1-15)

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Fall 2021

How-to:

1. Find **five times to meet** with your group between September 19 and November 7. Groups should be no fewer than 2(!) and no more than 10 people.
2. **Resist the urge** to focus on “what you will get” from this small group. Instead, ask yourself how you can contribute to this group, and what God is going to do through you because of this new community.
3. **Keep in mind** that healthy small groups will develop with an **investment** of time and a collection of shared experiences, and will flourish where there is trust and grace. Earn each other's trust by keeping **confidential** the personal details people share. Extend grace and respect to one another when you disagree on theology or on another topic. It will happen, and that's okay. As business leadership author Stephen R. Covey wrote, “Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.”
4. **Pray**. Open with a check-in (a high/low from the week and/or an experience of God), so you bring all of yourselves to the meeting. Close with prayer requests for the week, that you might hold one another in prayer.
5. **Use the self-assessment** tools at the back of the book as the basis for your discussions each week.

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BOOK PAGES 79-96 Assessments Pages 161

SCRIPTURE:

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

–Romans 12:1-2

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13 they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” 14 When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18 Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

- Luke 17:11-19

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Pages 82, 85, 88, 92, 96

1. What thoughts or feelings did the Care for the Body self-assessment bring up for you?
2. Based on the assessment, is there anything different you want to do related to your understanding of your physical wellness?
3. Which of these reflections stood out most to you? Why? What does that tell you about your relationships with your body, food, exercise, or aging?
4. Who has been a role model for you in aging well? Why?
5. Do you think of food in a spiritual way? Do you think of it as fuel for your body, or emotional comfort? How were these attitudes formed?
6. What is your body telling you about your spiritual health right now?

FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER:

Start by reading numbers 3-5 on the first page, and then sharing what motivated you to join this group. For this week, instead of sharing an experience of God, share the first thing that comes to mind when you think about God.

1. Discuss the “Activity for Reflection” from last week. What did you do differently this week. How did it go?
2. Read together “Reconciliation” on page 95. What does reconciliation have to do with physical wellness?
3. What reconciliations are necessary in your life? (Remember to maintain confidentiality, and be vulnerable!)
4. Are you surprised Stoner has a passage on gratitude in his discussion of physical wellness? Why/not?
5. What is one way in which you currently care for your body, that feels like soul care?
6. Decide which segments you want to highlight, either as a group leader, or as a group. Depending on the age/interests of your groups, I might suggest “Churches on the Move” on p. 87-8, “Soul Food” on p.89 and “Aging Well” on p.93

Finish by sharing your joys and concerns with one another. Write them down if it will help you remember them. Pray over them for each other during the upcoming week.

Closing Prayer: Use either of the prayers Stoner mentions on p. 15 as your closing – or say your own!

***ACTIVITY FOR REFLECTION DURING THE WEEK*:**

What is one practice, habit, or discipline that you are doing right now that is enhancing your emotional, spiritual, or relational wellness and helping you to grow older gracefully?

Is there a new or different practice, habit, or discipline that you would like to begin to help strengthen your wellness so you are ready for the challenges?