

BODY IMAGE IS DEFINED AS A PERSON'S PERCEPTION OF THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OR SEXUAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF THEIR OWN BODY.

Body image is greatly valued in our world today. Though a healthy body is good, for many people, physical health and beauty becomes an obsession. The quest to reach a physical standard created by the world can be devastating. Men and women alike struggle to find worth, acceptance, and approval in their own self-image rather than finding their worth in who God created them to be. God created humans to reflect His image and find value in His purpose for their lives.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Common areas of life that get out of balance when a person is obsessed with body image include:

- **Food-focused:** Do you regularly restrict food or have binge eating habits? Are you hyper-sensitive about what you can/cannot eat? Do you consistently count calories? Do you carry guilt and shame about your intake of “good” and “bad” foods? Are you sometimes ashamed to eat around others?
- **Prone to fads:** Are you continuously trying the newest diet or workout as a form of hope or security?
- **Constant comparison:** Do you feel negative or positive about yourself because of how your body compares to others or to a certain weight on a scale? Do you regularly want to look like someone else and find fault in your appearance? If possible, would you trade bodies with someone else?
- **Schedule dictated by appearance:** Is life scheduled around workouts, or do you get anxious when you miss a workout? Do you turn down social invitations because of your physical appearance?
- **How you feel is influenced by how you look to others:** If you don't look good to others, or go unnoticed, is it hard to feel good/right about yourself? Are you controlled by others' perceptions of you? Does your self-confidence (or lack thereof) depend on how you look?

- **Mirror obsession or avoidance:** Do you constantly look in the mirror, or avoid mirrors all together?
- **Self-worth is measured by your appearance:** Are you hyper-critical of yourself, often putting yourself down because your looks? Does improving yourself mean looking better tomorrow than you do today? Do you think that life would improve, that you would matter more, if you looked better? Do you feel most valuable when others notice you?

Self-sufficiency, managing others' perceptions, good health, and looking beautiful cannot fix the underlying problems driving a preoccupation with body image. At its core, this is a spiritual struggle. Trying to solve spiritual problems with physical solutions only leads to pain, isolation, loneliness, addiction, and defeat. To heal, you must turn your focus to God and let Him heal the spiritual problem.

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS

YOU ARE MARVELOUSLY CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE: Humans are unique and distinct from the rest of creation.

- “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)
- “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

YOUR BODY BELONGS TO GOD. YOU ARE ITS CARETAKER, NOT ITS OWNER.

God wants you to exalt Him with your body, not exalt yourself.

- “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 honor God with your bodies.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

SPIRITUAL HEALTH IS MORE VALUABLE THAN PHYSICAL HEALTH. IMPERISHABLE BEAUTY COMES FROM THE HEART:

Your physical body will fail you, God will not.

- “...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” (1 Timothy 4:7-8)
- “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” (1 Peter 3:3-4)

PHYSICAL BEAUTY CAN BE AN IDOL. GOD SHARES HIS GLORY WITH NONE.

You were made to worship God alone. Worshiping the created above the Creator or seeking self-glory will lead to destruction.

- “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator...” (Romans 1:22-25)
- “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth...” (Ezekiel 28:17 - Describing The Fall Of Satan Who Was An Angel)
- “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)

PERSONAL STRENGTH CANNOT OVERCOME YOUR FLESHLY DESIRES. ONLY CHRIST CAN TRANSFORM YOU.

When you accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you. By the power of the Spirit, you can live in freedom. You deeply matter to God. He has a plan for you.

- “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord.” (Jeremiah 17:5)
- “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)
- “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)
- “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

NEXT STEPS

- Ask Christ to heal you. Worship God by glorifying Him with your body (Romans 10:13, 12:1);
- The next time you feel controlled by how you look, stop, pray to God. Ask God to remind you that He created you for His glory. Identify/address any underlying causes with this struggle (Isaiah 43:7);
- Find a place, like **Restoration Pointe**, where you can talk without fear of judgment. Confess, bring this sin to the light, be healed (1 John 1:7-9, James 5:16);
- Prepare for vulnerable situations. Identify stressors that cause you to struggle and decide in advance how you will respond when temptation comes (1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 Peter 4:1-2);
- Don’t despair when you fail. Cry out to Jesus. God’s grace and love are unconditional (Romans 8:1);
- Body Image often goes hand in hand with insecurities, and depression. Read over the Depression Issue Sheet for more information;
- God loves you. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, visit [rprecovery.org/the-gospel](https://www.rprecovery.org/the-gospel).