

Part 2: Lesson Seven – Taking Care of the Temple

Day 4

Self-sacrifice: Living for Yourself or Living for Christ?

In the beginning of this lesson you read that a building can be damaged or destroyed through vandalism. Self-injury is something that some young women do that vandalizes and destroys their own body which is supposed to be the temple of God.

1. Read 1 Peter 2:5. This verse says you are being built up with other Christians as:
2. 1 Peter 2:5 says this spiritual house or temple is for the purpose of:

Just like someone uses a can of spray paint to vandalize a church or gasoline to ignite a fire that destroys a church building, there are young women who are using objects to burn, mark up, or scar their bodies. Self-injury can also include doing destructive things to your body like picking scabs, plucking hair or eyelashes. Anything you do that purposefully causes pain or harm to your body is called self-injury.

3. **If you have ever self-injured, use the space below to write out some of the emotions or thoughts you have every time you cause harm to yourself. What is your motive in doing this?**

Whether you realize it or not, you are sacrificing your *body* for a heart idol.

Even if you have never abused your body, I want to encourage you to keep reading so that you can understand some of the reasons why people choose to self-injure. One thing you need to know is that self-injury is an act of *choosing to love yourself more than anyone else*. Your focus is on making yourself feel better by injuring your body. This is actually a form of *self-love*, not self-hate like many people think.

There are three main *heart idols* that people are willing to commit self-injury for:

Sacrificing Your Body for Your Pain

One reason someone may hurt their body is to comfort themselves when they feel overwhelming emotional pain. A person who hurts their body on purpose may believe that physical pain is easier to deal with or to control than the intense emotional pain. The problem with this thinking is that as soon as the feeling from the physical pain is gone, the emotional pain is still there waiting to be dealt with. You are trying to deal with the pain *yourself* instead of looking to *Jesus* to heal you.

Self-injury is **not** a new or modern “trend”. The ancient pagans tortured their bodies as a form of grieving or crying out to their gods for help. God forbade His worshippers from grieving this way or sacrificing to Him by hurting themselves. Harming the body God gave you does not bring Him pleasure and it does not bring you lasting peace.

1. Read Deuteronomy 14:1-2. Why should you choose not harm yourself or defile your physical appearance?

(For additional Scriptures on self-injury, see Leviticus 19:28, 21:5, and 1 Kings 18:28.)

Self-injury prevents you from depending on Jesus to heal your deepest hurts and troubles. King David demonstrates a beautiful example of how to grieve in a way that honors and pleases God. In 2 Samuel 12:16-22, his baby dies and his servants were worried that he would hurt himself because of his deep grief, but he didn't. He trusted and depended on God to ease his pain and heal his broken heart.

Sacrificing Your Body to Demonstrate Your Control

Another reason you might self-injure is that a particular situation that has really scared you or made you angry and you feel like the only way you can have peace and security is to take control of the only thing you can...your body. The feelings and thoughts that rise up in you can be extremely intense and overwhelming. You might think injuring yourself calms you down or makes you feel something other than numbness. Perhaps you think you'll go crazy if you can't get a grip on reality and self-injury seems to help. However, after you self-injure, you still have to deal with the feelings, thoughts or uncontrollable situations that are still there. Even if you believe you have complete control over your body, you don't. **You only have control over your choices.** You cannot control the consequences of self-injury to your body or the effect it has on those who love you. This sin not only hurts you, *but others around you.* God is the only one who is truly in control of all things. God is Sovereign, you are not. A sovereign ruler is someone who reigns over their land. God alone has **all** authority and power to rule over everything in His creation. *Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."* **Matthew 28:18 (NIV)**

It could be that if you are trying to control things *your way*, you do not trust God to take care of your life *His way*. Ask Him to help you to believe and trust Him.

1. What does Hebrews 11:6 say that those who come to Him *must* do?

Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that God's ways are higher than ours. He's got an even better plan for your life than you do. He'll prove His faithfulness towards you as you trust Him day by day.

2. When you pray and ask for God's help, write out the promise given in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 personalizing it by inserting "me" instead of "you".

Sacrificing Your Body as Punishment

The last reason you might abuse your own body is to punish yourself. You think you need to punish yourself over some sin or because others are already beating up on you. Self-injury somehow makes you feel better, until your guilt or the memories of other's abuse returns. You need to remember that Jesus was already abused for both the sin you have committed and any sin committed against you by others.

1. According to Isaiah 53:5, what did Christ go through on your behalf because of your sin?

Do you realize that with every single self-inflicted pain you commit against your body, that you are saying Christ's wounds and punishment were not good enough to save you and heal you from your sin? Do you believe that you can punish yourself in a way that will please God's anger and wrath? If so, you are believing a lie. You cannot possibly bear the full punishment for your sins. Only Jesus was able to bear your punishment for you when He died on the Cross.

If you are cutting or injuring yourself until you see your blood run or your body bruised and marked, because it makes you feel "*alive*", you need to understand something very important. This is a scheme of Satan's to mock the precious blood of Christ that was *already* shed to give you *life*. Satan wants you to believe the **lie** that only your *self*-sacrifice will bring you peace. Please don't exchange Jesus' beautiful gift of His crucified body for the sacrifice of your own body. His sacrifice is the only one that will bring you peace.



Go to www.healinghearts.org/youth, click on the **Part 2 Media** link, and watch video #19.

2. Write out Romans 15:13. Again, personalize it by writing in "me" or "I" to personalize it.

Day 5

Sacrificing to Please Yourself or to Please God

At the heart of any sin is **self**-pleasure, rather than pleasing God. Self-injury is pleasing *your desire* to be comforted from emotional pain, to feel a sense of control or to punish yourself by using physical pain to try to bring you peace. Some people even cut or scar their bodies as a way to celebrate events in their lives. Seeing the “memorials” on their bodies brings them pleasure. King Solomon decided to chase after what would please his sinful flesh, too. He wrote about what he learned from his “pursuit of happiness” in the book of Ecclesiastes.

1. According to Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, what did Solomon say was the result of chasing his own pleasures?
2. What does Psalm 37:4 say God wants us to take delight in?
3. Psalm 51:16 says God does not want a typical sacrifice. What sacrifices does God desire according to Psalm 51:17?
4. What does Romans 12:1 say you are supposed to offer to God as a **living** sacrifice?

God does not desire the death or harm of your body. God loves life and is the Giver of Life. Living for God is the only thing you can do to please Him.

5. Who are you living to please right now, yourself or God? Why?

Eating in an unhealthy way and injuring yourself is not taking care of your body, God’s temple.

God desires your broken and humbled heart, not a broken and destroyed body. This is how to truly love Him with all your strength!

Go to www.healinghearts.org/youth, click on the **Part 2 Media** link, and watch video #20.



***If you are injuring your body in any way, and want help, Healing Hearts has recommended resources to your group leader. Ask your group leader about these resources. Please don't wait until severe damage is done to your body to get help.**

Are you having or have you had trouble taking care of your body in a healthy way?

Ask Jesus to help you begin to live for Him with all your strength today. Whether it is unhealthy eating or whether it is self-injury or both, you need to confess your sin of damaging God's temple. Repent by committing to eat healthy or getting help with stopping your self-injury. You can also repent by focusing your time on serving others instead of being focused on yourself.

Use the prayer below, you if you need help.

God, Thank you for giving me the gift of this body to serve You and others. I confess that I have used my body to please myself. I now choose to use this body to glorify and love You. I confess that I have been serving my heart idols by (*not eating healthy or injuring my body*). I repent of this selfish behavior. I receive Your forgiveness through the blood of Christ. My own blood or body could never satisfy the debt I owe You. Jesus has already paid my debt. I receive Your grace as I begin to walk daily in the good works You created for me to walk in. Please help me to "die" daily to my selfishness and pride as I choose to live for You instead. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

Use the space below to write one way you will *serve God* with your strength and one way you will *serve someone else* with your strength starting this week.

I will serve God by: (*Examples – spend my free time in prayer with Him and reading His Word, focusing on one of God's characteristics to imitate (like trustworthiness), or giving a portion of my money as an offering to God*)

I will serve someone else by: (*Examples – reaching out to another teenager who is in greater need, cleaning up a room at home that I am not normally responsible for, or helping my sibling with a project*)
