



The
Words
Make
Flesh.

A Body Stewardship
Workbook for Writers

by Adam R. Nettesheim

Introduction:

It can easily feel like our bodies are nothing more than an inconvenient necessity - its only job is to carry our head to the writer's desk where we must then use these strange five fingered appendages to transmit our thoughts to paper. Wouldn't writing be so much simpler if we didn't have to bother with these pesky bodies? But Scripture declares that our bodies are not an afterthought to the Author of our souls. Just like we can write stories on paper, so stories are written in our bodies every day, and these words, in a very real sense, 'make flesh'. Just as mankind was made by the spoken word of God, and He called it "very good" so the way we care for our bodies speaks volumes to our spirits about how "good" we think we are. And just as Jesus Christ is The Word made flesh, so God Himself reveals to us through the incarnation that the mortal human body has everlasting significance.

This book is prepared with the belief that the 'perfect body' to be in for your body stewardship journey is the body you have right now. We may all have wishes for certain things about us to be different, but to do so at the expense of our energies and love for these bodies will likely not serve us well. The goal is to care for your body, this body, right here and right now.

To that end, this workbook seeks to give resources to the writer in their own body-stewardship journey. This is not exhaustive or definitive but rather offered as a supplemental aid for the continuing journey. This is also not a book of ideas for the mind alone but rather invitations to embody. You are invited to doodle, write, stand up, stretch, feel, taste and see.

This book is written by a fellow journeyman, not a doctor nor physical therapist nor jacked protein fueled Instagram influencer. I'm someone, like you, trying to figure this out as I go along. Anything that seems like it might affect your body in an unhelpful way can be laid aside or consulted with your doctor.

If stories are made up of conflicts, no one need look any further than their own bodies to see the hero's journey. If you can walk, your journey in doing so was a herculean effort. The body's immune system is intended to wage war for each of our survival every day. The systems and cells that form us is a universe unto itself. And if we believe we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) then we are worshiping our Creator by caring for the beloved creation that reflects Him. And a clearer mind bolstered by good nourishment, blood-flow and appropriate amounts of sleep helps us love our audience better.

Your body is a fellowship of many different parts, and each part offers to the quest of your writing their "axe" and "bow" and "sword". Your body is a wardrobe from which the magical lands all around us are experienced. Your body is the place where all adventures begin.

Are you quite ready for another adventure?

Let's go further up and further in.

The Good Soil:

In Matthew 13 Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower. He makes His listeners aware of the difficulty some will have in being receptive to the Gospel. This parable also shares wisdom about the difficulties of making any meaningful life change – be that in body stewardship or in being a writer.

When planting a garden, there are forces we cannot control. Drought, unseasonable snow storms, and, as this parable describes, invasive birds. The same applies to life. There are forces at work that are not within our power alone to address. In the face of them we might feel the impulse to quit any effort that faces opposition, but like drought, unseasonable snowstorms and birds, there are things we can do to ‘weather’ these storms (and birds).

There are also physical realities we bump up against – things about our bodies or our communities or the realities of life that are, maybe not bad, but are inconvenient to the cultivation of what we seek to grow. We do not control our genetics, there are financial obligations, community expectations to navigate... there are aspects of our environment and our embodiment that we must navigate around to get to the ‘good soil’. For our purposes, let’s identify these as “rocks”.

Any gardener will likely attest to the reality of weeds. Pervasive unwanted plants that worm their way into our gardens with deep roots, thistles and thorns. Jesus described the weeds as the “worries of life” and the “deceitfulness of wealth”. Fears and distractions can often rob meaningful growth in any good endeavor. The ‘weeds’ for our purposes will be the challenges of the mind – imposter syndrome, hard heartedness, writer’s block, despair and discouragement, comparison, bitterness, jealousies...etc. Things that can keep us stuck in one place or ‘choke’ our cultivated growth.

A gardener must identify what a weed is and what the desired plant is – oftentimes in their early stages they can look similar, but the sooner they can be pulled the better. Larger rocks that can’t be moved can often times be navigated around. And resources can help us navigate inevitable birds if we plan ahead.

This framework can be applied to any “seed” we wish to cultivate, (*including our writing*) but here we will apply it to body stewardship. This exercise makes space for you to identify the “birds” “rocks” and “weeds” so that you can steward the beautiful gift that your incarnated body is.

- What is your Body Stewardship Goal?
- What are the “birds” (*existential or large environmental things outside of your control*) that might affect your goal?
- What are the “rocks” (*more ‘close to home’ life realities*) you must navigate around to be successful?
- What are the “weeds” (*temptations, distractions, impostor syndrome...etc*) that you can identify and ‘pull’? (*These often ‘grow back’ so how can you keep resources available to ‘pull them’ again if they come back.?*)

“Mad Men”ing your Body Stewardship Journey

Will Rogers once said “Advertising is the art of convincing people to spend money they don’t have on something they don’t need.” But a body is something you already have, and good stewardship of it is what we all need. To that end we’d do well to listen to a different Mister Rogers who advises us “Try your best to make goodness attractive. That’s one of the toughest assignments you’ll ever be given.”

For this exercise, pretend you’re an (ethical) 1960’s advertising executive. It’s your job to come up with a (truthful) add campaign to keep you ‘buying’ the idea of your own body stewardship.

Here are some ideas to help you ‘sell’ yourself:

- Come up with a “jingle” to sing to yourself when you’re just not ‘buying’ this whole ‘body stewardship thing. (e.g. *((to the tune of “Chili’s Baby-Back Ribs” jingle)) “I’m gonna take a walk, take a walk, take a walk, and then I’m gonna write, gonna write, gonna write . . . Bod-y Ste-hew-ard-Ship! *barbeque sauce **)
- Create a ‘billboard’ and tape it where you most need to be influenced. (e.g. *“A good story is not found at the bottom of a bag of chips.” or “Second Breakfast better be a protein shake.”...etc*)
- Write a ‘pull at your heartstrings’ commercial about the vegetables in your fridge needing a good home in your stomach and record it on your phone. (e.g. *like Sarah McLachlan holding puppies and singing I Will Remember You. “Please, won’t you eat this cabbage before it goes bad? What about this lost and lonely chicken breast. With just a few minutes on the grill you can make a real difference for these portobella mushrooms.”*)
- Get a celebrity endorsement. Create a meme of your favorite character, actor or singer telling you to do something good for your body. (e.g. *Christopher Walken with the caption “Hey pal, let’s get Walken!” or Katniss Everdeen with the caption “Defeat the Hunger Games with almonds and turkey jerky”...etc*)
- Sell the lifestyle. Just like those commercials with people who couldn’t be more thrilled with life than when they’re drinking that specific carbonated beverage, draw a picture of yourself ‘living your best life’ while doing the thing you want to influence yourself to do. (Don’t try to truly lie to yourself, but if laughing at the playful idea that doing five jumping jacks between each paragraph you write is going to cause Shaquille O’Neil to give you a high-five, go for it.)

Trigger Warnings:

This can happen preemptively, but it's likely that you'll be able to be more specific if it's after a lapse in your stewardship intentions. The goal is to identify what 'triggers' you towards unhelpful behaviors so that the next time those 'triggers' come up, you can see them as warnings and as invitations to use your resources towards better outcomes.

What was *(or is a common)* trigger? *(e.g. Birthday party in the break room at work, the habit of drinking too many sodas when you sit down to write or you see a discouraging result on the scale.)*
Get specific.

Oftentimes the 'trigger' is just a symptom of something unidentified. Underneath that "hunger" (for food or comfort) that lead to the lapse is a "deeper hunger". What is it? What were you really looking to satisfy? *(e.g. 'I wanted to feel a part of the community so I took a piece of cake even though I didn't want to' or 'I think caffeine will keep me alert and focused for writing' or 'I am worried I'll never reach my goals no matter how hard I try.')*

You may even want to 'dig' a few more layers to see what might be under those sub-layer "hungers". *(e.g. 'I don't feel comfortable being seen as different' or 'I'm worried I'm not a very good writer.' Or 'I feel incapable.')*

Sometimes these 'deeper digs' are best talked about with a trusted friend, spiritual advisor or therapist. Once the "deeper hungers" are identified, see how you can bring grace, comfort, nourishment and courage to those "hungers". Identify "healthy foods" to feed those deeper hungers the next time a 'trigger' warns you about that hunger longing to be filled.

When triggered (or thinking about a past trigger) ask:

- What triggered me?
- What are the deeper hungers?
 - Dig as deep as you can/feel safe doing.
- What are the healthy ways I can feed the deeper hunger when the surface level 'trigger' comes again?
 - Is there a scripture, prayer, poem or quote that supports this? *(e.g. when I feel discouraged that my body stewardship journey is not seeing the results I want I remember Romans 5:3-4.)*

Pizza does not Equal Peace

“Idols are not usually bad things but good things turned into ultimate things-- things that constitute our most fundamental significance and security and so function as ‘gods’ in our lives.” - Tim Keller

Occasionally we will believe the false promises that “pizza = peace” or “avoidance = deliverance”. We must identify these ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing’ and tear down these ‘idols’ that claim to be something that they are not. Even when something is not inherently wrong (*pizza is often very right!*) if we view them as being something they are not, we, like all idol worshipers of old, will ultimately find the object of our misplaced adoration to be insufficient to our needs. And (*like in the case of pizza*) if something is good but is misused, we abuse it of its beautiful purposes and the gifts it was truly meant to be.

Draw a representation of what you struggle to see clearly for what it is wearing a mask that represents what you often see it as. (*e.g. a slice of pizza wearing a mask with a peace sign*)

Cast Your Phone Into Mount Doom

Imagine if Frodo had a smart-phone. Sure, the map app would have made getting to Mount Doom a lot faster in theory, but how far would he have gotten if he kept stopping to play Angry Eagles or Lembas Crush or Mines of MoriaCraft? Gifts can become curses when they occupy so much of our time and attention that we forget the quest we are called to. What are the distractions that most pull you away from your quest? What can you leave behind, and what must you keep but need strong boundaries with?

What do you do with the ‘mad’ that you feel?

Mister Rogers sang those words (and read them before congress) to help children (and congressmen) learn that feelings are mentionable and manageable, but we have to choose to do appropriate things with them. Write down the feelings that trip you up and things you can do to ‘manage’ them appropriately. (*e.g. when I feel imposter syndrome, rather than shutting down or spiraling out, I can call a friend or family member who loves me and check in on them, or pray and thank God for loving me, for creating me with intention, and for loving me even in my imperfect-ness.*)

Declutter your Dragon Hordes

What do we wrap around us because we can’t let it go? (*Physical clutter on our writer’s desks? A closet full of keepsakes that keep collapsing into the hallway? A bedside table with a tower of books that is due to collapse on us while we sleep at the slightest breeze?*) Even emotional ‘clutter’, things that just take up a lot of space in our heads but does not serve us now. (*Bitterness, old arguments we*

keep replaying, shame about things long repented of...etc.) Sometimes we horde these things like dragons, defending them against any impulse we might have to clear things out. It's amazing how critical a knick-knack we keep tripping over can feel the minute someone recommends we throw it out. Sometimes we romanticize the 'chaotic life of a writer or artist', but why must good work have to climb over our piles of papers and cardboard boxes too? Isn't bringing an idea to life difficult enough? We may not feel we have time to clean up the places we inhabit, and yet the time we spend in those spaces will likely be far more fruitful if we are not fearful of our imminent demise because the pile of trash in the corner just might have become sentient and is getting bigger and bigger. Taking the time to clean up takes care of your body and takes care of your ability to write as well.

Keep Your Feet on the Ground

When we become most disconnected from our bodies it is good to 'ground' ourselves back in them. Breath exercises, tactile experiences, meditating, prayer, movement...etc.

Make a list of 'grounding' activities to bring you back to yourself when you feel you're having an unhelpful 'out of body experience'.

40 Day Body Reset

40 is often a number connected to events of trial or change in Scripture. Lent is a 40 day practice as is Advent. Transformation can be given time to find its feet when we set aside 40 days with the intention of establishing a better way of stewarding our bodies. If you choose to, take 40 days and each day answer the following questions in as much detail as you can. This is not about shaming, it's about bringing awareness, accountability and appreciation to our efforts. This will also be helpful for understanding your unconscious ways of being in your body and moving throughout your day. Becoming aware will give you greater access to choices and chances to change unhelpful unidentified patterns.

- How well did I serve my body today: (1-10)
- What was my relationship with food like today?
- How did I move my body today?
- What did I feed my mind & heart today?
- What was the best part about existing today?
- What would my 'coach' say to me about today? (*If you had a coach supporting you in your journey, a nurturing but direct source of awareness and accountability - but ALWAYS your advocate, what would they say about today?*)
- In light of the challenges/successes from today what does tomorrow's future you need to hear from 'past' you about how they can live their day well?
- Is there a Scripture, story or quote you find most supportive right now?
- What do you need to bring to God about today?

- What can you celebrate and thank Him for?
- What do you need to repent of?
- What do you need to lay at His feet and ask for His help with?

Body Stewardship through the Proverbs?

Verses & Quotes

Proverbs 28:13

Prevention is better than Cure - Ben Frank

Matthew 13:44- treasure in a field

Prov 23:5 set your eyes on that which is not

Prov 22:13 sluggard lion (don't make it worse for yourself)

With great power comes great responsibility - Uncle Ben

"Trauma in a person decontextualized over time looks like personality...etc" Respasdkj Menakem

"Your decisions are your destiny" inspired by a Tony Robbins quote?

Philippians 4:19

"Our bodies are our gardens - our wills are our gardeners." - William Shakespeare

Prov 17:12 bear cub fool folly

"It's the choices that make us who we are...etc" Spiderman 3

Matthew 11:29-30 yoke

"May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears" Nelson Mandela

Prov 13:12 hope deferred

"Work out because you love your body, not because you hate it." - Unknown

"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." Jim Rohr?

"Here ends another day..." Chesterton

Prov 9:5-6

Prov 24:16

Romans 3:3

“Your body hears everything your mind says” Naomi Judd

“Talitha Kum” Little lamb get up - Jesus (rise up and live

1 Cor 9:27

“Do you want to be happy tomorrow? Then sow seeds of happiness today. ...” Max Luicado Anxious for Nothing

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow” - Audrey Hepburn

“An idiot with a plan can beat a genius without a plan” warren buffet

Prov 1:30-31 binge wisdom

Prov 1 reflection through ED lense on 40 day reset day 2

Prov 2 “ on day 3

Prov 3 “ on day 4

Prov 4 “ on day 5

Prov 5 “ on day 6

Prov 6 “ on day 7

Prov 7 “ on day 8

Prov 8 “ on day 9

Prov 9 “ on day 10

Prov 10 “ on day 11

Prov 11 “ on day 12

Prov 12 “ on day 13

Prov 13 “ on day 15

Prov 14 “ on day 16

Prov 15 “ on day 17

Prov 16 “ on day 18

Prov 17 “ on day 19

Prov 18 “ on day 20

Prov 19 “ on day 22

Prov 20 “ on day 23

Prov 21 “ on day 25

Prov 22 “ on day 26

Prov 23 “ on day 27

Prov 24 “ on day 28

Prov 25 “ on day 29

Prov 27 “ on day 31a