



The
Words
Make
Flesh.

A Body Stewardship
Workbook for Writers

by Adam R. Nettesheim

The Words Make Flesh.
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First Edition

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

“Here dies another day
During which I have had eyes, ears, hands
And the great world round me;
And with tomorrow begins another.
Why am I allowed two?”

— G.K. Chesterton

Introduction:

While working on my book *13 Short Stories of Longing* I realized how little I was getting up to walk around, how I wasn't eating terribly well, and how – in general – I was disregarding my physical health. As someone recovering from an eating disorder it is all the more important that I take my body seriously. If I wanted to continue writing books then I was going to need to rethink what body stewardship meant for a writer. But what I also learned, is that though not everyone has the same circumstances as me, many writers struggle with their own body stewardship – especially when they're in the thick of the work.

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 as we 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.

Admittedly, this work book is written from the perspective of someone who struggles with over-eating, but for those with eating habits that compel them to restrict in unhealthy ways, their struggle is just as real. They have their own need to reconnect with the miraculous body God has given them. To find an intrinsic beauty not based on false and fleeting societal beauty standards but based only on God's belovedness. This matters deeply to us all and I hope some things here will serve everyone in their unique journeys.

There is zero shame implied in anything offered here. 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 spend too much time dwelling on that might drain the vital energies and encouragement we need to serve our current bodies well. The goal is to care for your body, this body, right here and right now and shepherd it towards whatever flourishing means for you in this season.

To that end, *The Words Make Flesh. A Body Stewardship Workbook for Writers* 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 them. 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 discussed with your doctor.

If stories are made up of conflicts and challenges, no one need look any further than their own bodies to see the hero's journey play out. If you can walk, your journey in doing so at one time 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. 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 readers better too.

Your body is a fellowship of many different parts, and each part offers to the quest of your existence 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 your adventures begin.

Are you quite ready for another adventure?

Let's go further up and further in.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Matthew 13:1-9

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow”

– **Audrey Hepburn**

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. The wisdom of this parable could also be applied to 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 (*or storm crows*).

There are also physical realities we bump up against – things about our bodies or the limitations of our communities. Other realities of life that are, maybe not bad, but are inconvenient to the cultivation of whatever 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 physiology 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, disordered thinking, compulsions, comparison, bitterness, jealousies...etc. Things that can keep us stuck in one place or ‘choke’ our cultivated growth.

A gardener must identify what growth is a weed and what is the desired plant. 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 of your body well.

Questions to ponder:

- 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, disordered thinking, 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?*)

Something to do:

- Plant something either in your garden, yard or a pot. Notice how this process resonates with this Scripture and with your own writing & body stewardship journeys.

Something to pray:

- Bring to God anything that comes up for you. Ask Him to lead you as you process what you’ve discovered.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21 ESV

“It is the mind that makes the body.”

— **Sojourner Truth**

“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 something 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.” How can we make the goodness of body stewardship attractive to our imaginations?

Questions to ponder:

- Can you remember a favorite commercial? What made it memorable?
- What advertising are you most susceptible to? Claims of happiness, success, admiration from others?
- What most encourages you to make decisions in line with your body stewardship goals?
- What discourages you from them?
- What helps you to believe that your body is worth caring for?

Something to do:

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 the most. (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 when commercials feature actors ‘living their best life’ because 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 might cause Shaquille O’Neil to give you a high-five, go for it.)

Something to pray:

- Bring to God anything that comes up for you. Ask Him to lead you as you process what you’ve discovered.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT

“A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is... A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.”

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Trigger Warnings:

Identifying these can be done preemptively, but it's likely that you'll have more specific information if you can think about a previous lapse in your stewardship intentions. The goal is to identify what 'triggers' (or *tempts*) you 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" 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". Find healthy ways to address those deeper hungers the next time a 'trigger' causes your 'stomach to growl'.

Questions to ponder:

- What has triggered (*tempted*) me in the past?
- What are the deeper 'hungers' beneath the initial 'hunger'?
 - 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?

Something to do:

- Practice 'urge surfing' (*sitting in silent prayer while the temptation washes over you, trusting that it will eventually pass.*)

- Make a list of resources to help yourself navigate temptation. Keep the list close, and make sure there are plenty of things on that list that you can do any time anywhere.
- Is there a Scripture, prayer, poem or quote that supports that nourishment? (e.g. *when I feel discouraged that my body stewardship journey is not seeing the results I want I remember 1 Corinthians 10:13 or Romans 5:3-4.*)
- 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'.

Something to pray:

- Bring to God anything that comes up for you. Ask Him to lead you as you process what you've discovered.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Psalms 20:7 NIV

“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**

The Idols We Go to for Peace

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 true needs. And (*like in the case of pizza*) if something is good but is misused, we miss the real benefit it offers and turn a blessing into a curse.

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 about our ‘clutter’? 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 collapse into the hallway when we open the door? A bedside table with a teetering tower of books we ‘intend’ to read ((but know we never will?))*) 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 to ‘declutter’. It’s amazing how critical a knick-knack seems even though we keep tripping over it and can’t remember why we have it. There is a temptation to romanticize the ‘chaotic life of a writer or artist’, but does our best work really happen when we have to climb over piles of papers, clutter and pizza boxes to do it? 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 haunted by the pile of clutter in the corner that is growing and growing and possibly just achieved sentience. Taking the time to clean up takes care of your body and takes care of your ability to write as well.

Questions to ponder:

- Are there any ‘idols’ you need to tear down?

- What can you put in their place to redirect you to the Prince of Peace?
- What practices help you center yourself in God's love, not the false claims of other 'gods' that seem to offer 'peace'?
- How can you reorient your relationship with the 'good' things so you can enjoy them for what they are without making them 'ultimate' things?

Something to do:

- Draw a representation of what you struggle to see clearly for what it is (*a slice of pizza, a cellphone...etc.*) wearing a mask that represents what you often are tempted to see it as. (*e.g. a mask with a peace sign*)
- Draw yourself as Gandalf standing between a cave that looks like your mouth or brain, then draw a Balrog in the shape of something you have a disordered view of (*smart phone, pizza, possessions...etc.*) Have your Gandalf declare "You Shall Not Pass!"

Something to pray:

- Bring to God anything that comes up for you. Ask Him to lead you as you process what you've discovered.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28 NIV

What do you do with the mad that you feel
When you feel so mad you could bite?
When the whole wide world seems oh, so wrong...
And nothing you do seems very right?

-Mister Rogers

Big Tasty Feels

Compulsions often come from not feeling safe when we feel different emotions. (*Fear, inadequacy, anger...*) We instead look for something that can alter our emotions and help us feel safe or centered again. Food can make us feel good when we feel bad. A cellphone can give us a sense of agency when we feel the world around us is beyond our control. Both can provide us some sense of connectedness since meals are sometimes eaten together or social media makes promises of ‘friends.’ God made food to be delicious, and social media can have benefits but He did not make them to be a long-term viable solution for our deeper emotional regulation challenges. Stress can destabilize our relationship to food (*either not eating enough, eating too much, or eating things that are ‘quick’ and ‘easy’ but provide little appropriate nourishment.*) The same is true of our phones. Emotional regulation is important for us to learn. Discovering what can work for us that doesn’t cost our bodies negatively will help any body stewardship journey to thrive.

“What do you do with the mad that you feel?” Mister Rogers sang the lyrics to that song (*and read them before congress*) to help children (*and congressmen*) learn that feelings are mentionable and manageable. However, we have to choose to do appropriate things with them. Write down the feelings that trip you up, then write 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 creating me with intention, and for loving me even in my imperfect-ness.*)

Questions to ponder:

- Do you struggle to feel ‘safe’ when feeling uncomfortable emotions or inhabiting regular but uncomfortable circumstances?
- What feels most accessible to you to regulate those feelings that might not be serving you well?
- What can you train yourself to put in its place so when you feel those feelings you have a more generative way of processing them?

Something to do:

- From his song “What Do You Do With The Mad That You Feel”, Mister Rogers asks the following: “What do you do? Do you punch a bag? Do you pound some clay or some dough? Do you round up friends for a game of

tag? Or see how fast you go?” Is there a way you can get ‘out of your head’ and ‘into your body’? To add movement and ‘work out’ some emotion through expending physical energy?

Something to pray:

- Bring to God anything that comes up for you. Ask Him to lead you as you process what you’ve discovered.

Write your own “Asher Yatzar”

There are aspects of body stewardship we might not be particularly fond of, or might be difficult or uncomfortable. And yet each aspect of our being is a place God’s grace can meet us in. As the Jewish blessing for leaving the bathroom reminds us, so much of what we take for granted is profoundly important to the functioning of our bodies.

*“Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, King of the universe,
who formed man with wisdom
and created within him many openings and many hollow spaces.
It is obvious and known before Your Seat of Honor
that if even one of them would be opened,
or if even one of them would be sealed,
it would be impossible to survive and to stand before You even for one hour.
Blessed are You, Adonai, who heals all flesh and acts wondrously.”*

-Asher Yatzar

Write your own prayer of blessing over some aspect of your body stewardship journey that is most challenging for you. E.g., “A Prayer for Portioning My Food”

Lord God,

You have given me the gift of your generous abundance in the food I am given to eat. And yet Lord, I also know that contentment is wisdom, and gluttony is not gain. My stomach is of a certain size, my nourishment needs are as they are. To feast in celebration is a gift, but to exceed my capacity as a practice is not treating the miraculous digestive system you have given me with love. Help me to honor you by the food I eat today. May it be to your glory and gratitude for your gifts. May I not deprive my body of the nutrients you created me to need, but may I also not overindulge, seeking something beyond what you made this food to provide. May each bite remind me of your goodness and may I listen to when my body reaches a peaceful place of contentment – knowing I have been given enough. May I know that your gift is both in the giving and in the laying aside of the gift when that gift has done its intended work. Your cup may runeth over, your mercies are never ending, but you call us to receive just our portion with thanksgiving. What a gift giver you are Lord. Thank you for this food. In Jesus name, Amen.

And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

1 Kings 19:8 ESV

“Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.”

-Leo Tolstoy

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. But transformation can also come from awareness. Noticing, and adjusting what is, rather than trying to manufacture something that isn't. In this 40 day reset, the goal is to reconnect with your body. In doing so you will be more able to identify the patterns of your life and to determine what is helpful and what is not. How are you receiving the gift of your life, and how are you not? How are you loving yourself as Christ loved you, and how have you fallen short? This is not about shaming, it's about bringing awareness, accountability and appreciation to our lives. It may also unearth some unconscious things that have deep roots that need attending to. Becoming aware will give you greater access to choices and chances to change unhelpful unidentified patterns.

The 40 Day Journal:

Get a journal and every day for 40 days answer each of the following questions in as much detail as you can.

- 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? (*Pretend you have a coach supporting you in your journey - a nurturing but direct source of awareness and accountability - but a coach who is 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?

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to
understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for
understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden
treasures, then you will understand the fear of the
Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:1-5 ESV

The only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge
so badly that they seek it while the conditions are still unfavourable.
Favourable conditions never come.

CS Lewis

Body Stewardship through the Proverbs (Starter)

The Book of Proverbs hold wisdom for many aspects of life, and much of its wisdom can be applied to a variety of areas of life. Reading Proverbs through a 'body stewardship' lens has been rather interesting for me. When Solomon talks about the value of 'wisdom', he means it broadly, but within that broad definition certainly must include the wisdom of living in harmony with the bodies our God made us in. Not everything will lend itself to body stewardship specifically, but even wisdom applied to other disciplines can also sometimes inform other journeys too. Below are reflections on the first four chapters of Proverbs through the lens of body stewardship. Read each chapter of Proverbs yourself and write your own reflection. Then continue on your own throughout the other chapters.

Read Proverbs 1

Notes to ponder:

Solomon commends his readers and his son to the gaining, valuing and applying of wisdom. Wisdom assists those who are "young" and "simple". As I struggle with body stewardship, in this category, I am often 'simple' and in need of such wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." To treat how God made my body with disregard is not wisdom, and is not worship. Trusting the wisdom of His gift of my biology and living appropriately within that – proper nourishment, hydration, movement and rest... – helps me to be 'wise' as it pertains to caring for the gift of my body.

Gaining valuable insights from our 'fathers' and 'mothers' (*mentors, health coaches, those we can learn from who have our best interests at heart*) is deeply valuable. Online influencers can sometimes be inspiring and helpful, but oftentimes many of them have views of what is healthy and appropriate for the human body that creates discontentment with our biology rather than wholeness. Proverbs warns us about falling in with 'sinful men' who 'entice' us to live at odds with God's goodness. "Let's lie in wait for innocent blood, let's ambush some harmless soul; let's swallow them alive, like the grave." Some 'health influencers' offer 'remedies' that do not serve anyone's biology, but rather commit

violence on our systems. Advertisements that create unhealthy body standards is like longing for wax fruit because of its manufactured 'perfection' while rejecting the nourishing natural fruit that's available. Knowing where to go for good health advice is just as important as having discernment about where not to go.

The final parts of this chapter may seem harsh – wisdom laughing at those who reject her. But we understand that “There are some natures too noble to curb and too lofty to bend.” (Little Women) Our bodies are gifts of love, their systems are miraculous, and there is indeed some level of grace built into the system, but there are limits to what our bodies can endure. We do well to treat our bodies with 'wisdom' not 'foolishness'.

Read Proverbs 2

Notes to ponder:

Good choices begin long before the moment of choice happens. If the only time we put any work into discernment is in the moment where we have to make a critical choice, we greatly increase our chances of making an uninformed and unhelpful choice. Gaining wisdom is a gift and a guard to your future self. Walking in wisdom with your body is the same thing. We will all face various trials in life and in our bodies. What we learn about the body and how we care for it and treat it with the dignity and respect that is fitting for a being made in the image of God will support not just today, but also tomorrow.

That discernment will also guide against those who wish to entice you into thinking their consumable product is the answer to any ache we may feel. We writers value well crafted words, but sadly this is not always employed in the world for virtuous purposes.

Scripture tells us to 'make level paths for our feet' (Hebrews 12:13). The more we prepare our path, the better we will be able to walk it. If I know that I am entering into a situation where I might be vulnerable to making choices that are not in keeping with what flourishing might mean for me in this season, I do well to either

change my route, or to resource myself to walk that path with wisdom and discernment.

Read Proverbs 3

Notes to ponder:

My appetite, especially when it is out of practice with good discernment, is often a poor judge of what is good for my body. That certainly does not mean that good food can't taste great, and that if it tastes bad I should choke it down because 'kale'... but it does mean that if I am only 'wise in my own eyes' or if I am 'leaning on my own understanding' without applying wisdom, discernment and appropriate appetite guidance, then I am much less likely to make wise choices. When you scroll social media you may see many examples of 'happy' people living at odds with their God given biology, but Scripture invites us to not envy them or let your appetites be shaped by the false and fleetingness of their claims.

Wise choices as it pertains to our bodies 'prolongs your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity'. The length of our days and the life in our days is enhanced and given greater scaffolding by what we do with our bodies today. It's not about what you didn't do yesterday, it's about what you will do today to serve your body with love and faithfulness. Sustain your existence with good things and it will serve you long-term.

'Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.' Living in harmony with (or honoring God with what choices we make with) our bodies has rewards and gives provisions in more abundance than living in the scarcity of unhelpful consumption. Food is a blessing, a blessing from God. But all of God's blessings can be corrupted when we use them improperly – same with our bodies. Nourishing food that is eaten to God's glory and with love for our bodies in appropriate amounts (it's not just about too much, but also too little) is an act of gratitude.

Read Proverbs 4

Notes to ponder:

We set an example for others by our actions – but that does not mean altering what is good for our bodies for the false approval of others. An alive, flourishing person, at home in their skin, stewarding their bodies well, regardless of what modern ‘beauty standards’ may say, this is a person more whole and more ‘wise’ than those who ‘appear’ whole but are not. The goal is not for any of us to look at another body than our own and think “my body is not a good body because it doesn’t look like theirs”. Our goal is rather to take care of the body we have right now and appreciate the gift of our bodies right here and now, to love it and care for it as the gift it is, honoring the gift of our biology and the God who gave it to us. What does movement look like for you right now? What does nourishment look like? Hydration? Medication? Therapy? Support groups?

“For they cannot rest until they do evil, they are robbed of sleep until they make someone stumble.” Compulsive behaviors can drive a lot of ill-health and are worth investing time and resources into attending to – be that through therapy or mental health assistance of other kinds that give us our sense of control back. Nor are dissociative helpful. What removes me from being present in, listening to and loving this body as God would have me love it?

We ought never “eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence” no matter how well they are advertised. And if our appetites have been shaped by consumerism or by the chemical manipulation some manufacturers have applied to their products, we are wise to do the hard work of regaining control of our appetites again. This must be done with love and grace – for there is no good in trying to love the body by hating the mind. The whole of us must be received and shepherded with love, even as we must submit ourselves to what true wisdom means for our bodies right now.

Continue through the Proverbs, reading them and then journaling your response to them through the lens of body stewardship (and anything else God brings up for you). Put your reflections in a place where they can be accessible for times when you 'forget' the 'wisdom' and need to be reminded.

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 NIV

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

— **T. S. Eliot**

There and Back Again . . .

As Chesterton said, “The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on one's own country as a foreign land.” Any journey of body stewardship is meant to bring you right back to where you started in the beginning – your very own precious body. However, it is your view of it that is new. A new appreciation, a new (*and loving*) accountability, a new way of living and moving and speaking to yourself and caring for yourself. A new way of feasting and a new way of fasting. A new way of walking, running, swimming, jumping, and resting well. An awareness, a love and a grace for the limitations of the season, all while seeking what can be achieved in the name of the flourishing stewardship of this body right here right now. The writer has been given a great and beautiful story to inhabit. And how we treat our bodies is how we write on our flesh.

Let us write that story with love.

Welcome home.

Welcome back.

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 NIV

But Sam turned to Bywater, and so came back up the Hill, as day was ending once more. And he went on, and there was yellow light, and fire within; and the evening meal was ready, and he was expected. And Rose drew him in, and set him in his chair, and put little Elanor upon his lap.

He drew a deep breath. ‘Well, I’m back,’ he said

J.R.R. Tolkien

The Words Make Flesh: A Body Stewardship Workbook for Writers

by Adam R. Nettesheim

Writer. Doodler. Thread Puller.

2026

About Adam . . .

Adam R. Nettesheim is the author of "13 Short Stories of Longing" published by Cultivating Oaks Press. He serves as director of The Maker's Project; a columnist for Cultivating Magazine; and has led classes for the C.S. Lewis Writer's Conference. Through writing, teaching, and illustrating, Adam seeks to pull on the golden thread that leads us Homeward. He and his radiant wife, Sarah, and their three remarkable children, a dog or two, a handful of chickens and whatever else trots and flutters on their family homestead, "The Netteshire," live in Colorado. Adam's writings and more can be found at: www.adamrnettesheim.com

Also available from Adam R. Nettesheim:

13 Short Stories of Longing:

A house wren, a clarinet, a monk and a little sprout . . .

When Adam R. Nettesheim began writing short stories for Cultivating Magazine in 2019 he had no thought of writing them all with a common theme. But as he was invited to put them together in a printed compilation, it became clear that longing was the common thread that wove them all together.

13 SHORT STORIES OF LONGING follow characters through grief and hardship, but each points towards something beyond their present circumstances. Sometimes those longings are met by the end of the story, sometimes hope is all they are left with, but each declares that there is something beyond what is visible to the eye that pulls our hearts upward, when all else pulls them back.

The hope of any story in this book is to invite the readers to consider where all our longings might truly find what they pointed us to all along, even when it's hardest to see.

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