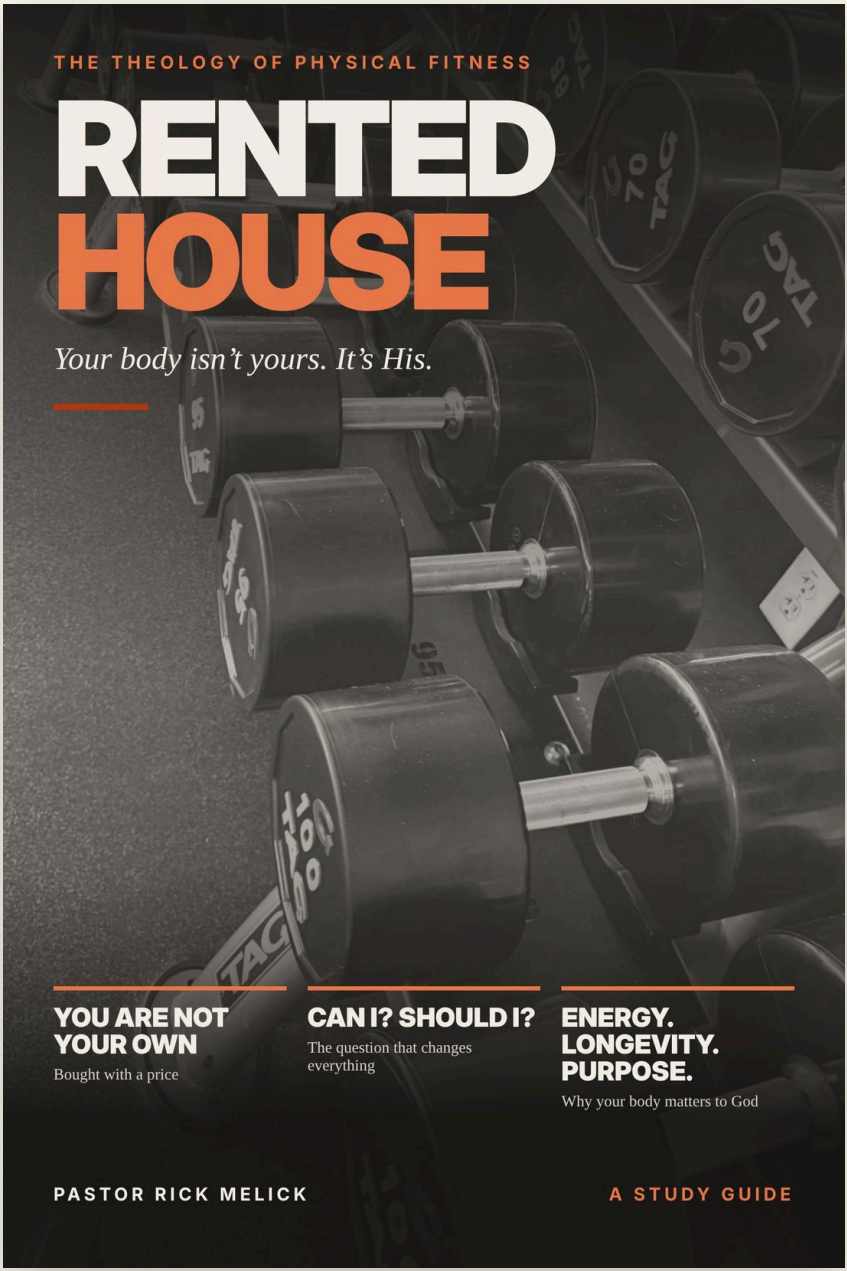

THE THEOLOGY OF PHYSICAL FITNESS
RENTED HOUSE
Your body isn't yours. It's His.
YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN
Bought with a price
CAN I? SHOULD I?
The question that changes everything
ENERGY. LONGEVITY. PURPOSE.
Why your body matters to God
PASTOR RICK MELICK
A STUDY GUIDE

☰ CONTENTS

1

Start Here

GETTING STARTED · CHAPTER 1 OF 9



This is not a diet plan.

It isn’t a workout plan, either. I won’t tell you what to eat or how many push-ups to do.

What he will tell you is that **your choices matter.** Your body is how you show up for your family, your friends, your church and the work God has given you. How you care for it shapes how much energy you bring, how long you’re here, and how ready you are when God calls.

THE BIG IDEA

You're living in a rented house. God owns it, his Spirit lives in it, and one day you'll hand back the keys. What kind of tenant do you want to be?

How this book is laid out

The book has three sections. Read it straight through, or jump to any chapter.

Getting Started

1. Start Here, the big idea and where this fits
2. The Core Text, the verse behind it all

The Four Steps, Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

3. Step 1: You Were Bought with a Price
4. Step 2: Your Body Is Not Your Own
5. Step 3: Your Body Is a Temple
6. Step 4: Honor God with Your Body

Living It Out

7. Myth vs. Truth
8. The 7-Day Challenge
9. Talk It Over, questions and a closing prayer

Where this fits

These chapters come from two sermons that closed out a four-week

- **Week 1 · Resolution.** When we pursue God's goals, in faith and for his glory, we can't fail.
- **Week 2 · Reconciliation.** Jesus made the first move toward us. Now we carry that message to the people closest to us.
- **Weeks 3 & 4 · Physical Fitness.** This book. Watch Part 1 and Part 2.

2

The Core Text

GETTING STARTED · CHAPTER 2 OF 9

This whole study grows out of two verses:

> *"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)

Paul wrote these words to a church in Corinth that had mixed religion with prostitution. It's easy to read the passage, nod, and think, "Well, that's not me."

But the Corinthians had a bigger problem underneath. They believed that as long as their spirit belonged to Jesus, it didn't matter what they did with their bodies. Paul disagrees. Body and spirit both belong to God, and that truth reaches far beyond Corinth.

Paul's argument in four steps

The next four chapters take these verses one step at a time. Each step comes with a question to ask yourself.

Step 1 · You were bought with a price. *Who do I belong to?*

Step 2 · You are not your own. *Whose approval am I living for?*

Step 3 · Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. *Am I limiting what God can do through me?*

Step 4 · Honor God with your body. *Will I invite him into this part of my life?*

MEMORY VERSE

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price." Write it on a sticky note and put it where you'll see it every day.

3

Step 1: You Were Bought with a Price

THE FOUR STEPS · STEP 1 OF 4 · FROM SERMON 1

The question: Who do I belong to?

Joy and I own a house in Arkansas that one of our sons rents from us. One day the water heater started acting up. He called me and said, “If it were my house, I wouldn’t worry about it. But it’s *your* house. I want to give it back to you in better shape than when I moved in.”

That’s the heart of this whole study. **Your body is a rented house, and God is the owner.**

It’s also a house that ages. I once spent three hours helping a friend haul furniture and walked away thinking, “We’ve still got it!” The next morning, I couldn’t straighten my hand. Every one of us is getting a little older every day. So what do we do with the time we have?

What this verse does *not* mean

For many people, “your body is a temple” sounds like a rule book. When I was growing up, church leaders used the verse to control people: no tattoos, no long hair on boys, nothing that didn’t fit their picture of a Christian.

That isn't what Paul meant. Some choices are plainly destructive, and I'll say so. But this passage isn't a list of rules. It's an invitation to freedom.

Under new ownership

When you follow Jesus, you come under **new ownership,** not just new management. Jesus paid for you with his own life. That purchase set you free from four things:

- **God's judgment.** The penalty for sin has been paid. Romans 3:23–25
- **Sin's grip.** You don't have to stay stuck in the cycle of doing what you don't want to do. Romans 7:15–25
- **Your past.** Your history, regrets and old ways of thinking no longer define you. 2 Corinthians 5:17
- **Other people's expectations.** That includes the world's idea of beauty and success, and church rules that aren't in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 7:23

> *"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings."*
>
> **1 CORINTHIANS 7:23 (NIV)**

You don't have to measure yourself against an influencer, a gym crowd or anyone's opinion. You live for an audience of One.

In one sentence: You belong to God, which frees you from everyone else's expectations.

4

Step 2: Your Body Is Not Your Own

THE FOUR STEPS · STEP 2 OF 4 · FROM SERMON 1

The question: Whose approval am I living for?



The world has its own plan for your body, and it isn't a good one. It pushes short-term goals: lose weight for the cruise, fit into the dress for the reunion, look good for the next photo. You lose 25 pounds, gain them back, and start over. That cycle leaves people frustrated and worn out.

Paul offers a different way.

> *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*
>
> ROMANS 12:1–2 (NIV)

Notice the first thing Paul asks us to offer God: **our bodies.** Caring for them, for his sake, is an act of worship.

Motivation and discipline

I separate two things that often get confused:

- **Motivation** is wanting to do it. It grows when you find exercise you actually enjoy. I enjoy lifting weights, and I listen to sermons on the treadmill.
- **Discipline** is doing it anyway, on the days you don't feel like it. I'll be honest: about two days out of five, I don't want to go to the gym. I go anyway.

Your version won't look like anyone else's, and it doesn't need to. My dad, in his 80s, walks laps at the mall. A friend from church runs Ironman triathlons. I celebrate both. If you aren't walking to the mailbox right now, walking to the mailbox is a great start.

What finally changed for me

For years, I lost weight, gained it back, and bought new “church pants” again and again. When a staff member asked what finally made the difference, I thought about it and said:

> *“I was just done making excuses.”*

Three reasons keep me going:

1. **I know a body can fail.** I once woke up feeling fine and learned I had cancer.
2. **I love my family.** When we neglect our health, we’re writing a check somebody else has to cash. I want to be a blessing to my kids as I age, not an avoidable burden.
3. **I belong to God.** My greatest fear is that my own habits might cut short my usefulness to God.

TRY THIS

My best time to exercise is mid-morning, when the gym is quiet. Look at your own week. When is your window? And what might you need to give up to make room for it?

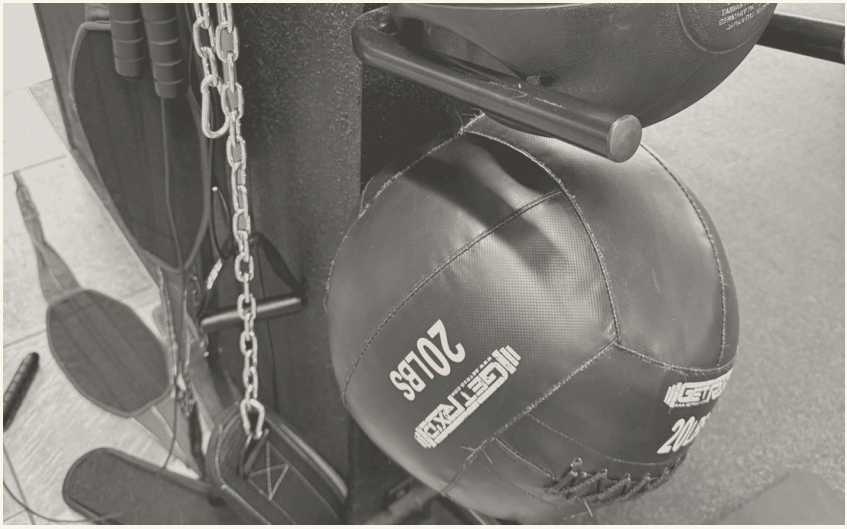
In one sentence: Caring for your body is worship, done for God’s purposes and not the world’s.

5

Step 3: Your Body Is a Temple

THE FOUR STEPS · STEP 3 OF 4 · FROM SERMON 2

The question: Am I limiting what God can do through me?



You can't fake it

When I was in first grade, my dad told me that strong athletes get their build from hard work in the gym. I decided to skip the work and just *walk like* an athlete. A month later, my teacher called home to ask whether I needed physical therapy.

My dad set me straight: “You have to work for that. You can’t just show it.”

Faith works the same way. Some people start out excited and learn a lot. Then, slowly, they learn to say and do just enough to fit in at church, and they stop growing. Here’s my reminder: knowing more isn’t the same as growing deeper. “Depth is applying the information that you have.”

God lives in you

For the Jewish people, the temple was the place where God’s presence dwelled. Paul tells believers that now **God’s presence lives in them.**

Here’s a simple way to picture the Trinity:

- **The Father** is the architect. He has the plan.
- **The Son** is the actor. He carried out the work of salvation.
- **The Holy Spirit** is the animator. He supplies the power that brings it to life in us.

Here’s what the Spirit does in every believer:

- **Seals** our salvation. Ephesians 1:13–14
- **Prays** for us when we have no words. Romans 8:26
- **Guides** us into truth. John 16:13
- **Grows** good fruit in our character. Galatians 5:22–23
- **Convicts** us where something needs to change. John 16:8

Jesus told his disciples it was better for them that he go away, because then he would send the Spirit (John 16:7). In his earthly body, Jesus could be in only one place at a time. The Spirit lives in every

I call this next verse the heart of my whole argument:

> *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*
>
> ACTS 1:8 (NIV)

"Where you are, God is. And where you go, God goes."

That's why this matters. If God works through your body, then the way you treat your body can open doors for his work, or close them.

From "Can I?" to "Should I?"

"Can I?" is a child's question, and it's a fine place to start. Growing believers learn to ask better ones:

- Not just "Can I?" but **"Should I?"**
- Not just "Is it okay?" but **"Is it best?"**
- Not just "Is it allowed?" but **"Will it make me more useful to God and to others?"**

Here's how I put it: the Holy Spirit doesn't usually meet us in the *cans*. He meets us in the *shoulds*.

Here's a sobering thought. We laugh about our weakness for donuts or fast food. If someone admitted a drug habit, no one would laugh. But both are ways of harming the body. One is just slower.

In one sentence: God’s Spirit lives in you, so your choices can widen or narrow what he does through you.

6

Step 4: Honor God with Your Body

THE FOUR STEPS · STEP 4 OF 4 · FROM SERMON 2

The question: Will I invite God into this part of my life?

No one forced you to follow Jesus. You said yes freely. Paul's final step is simple: honor God with the body he has given you.

Not their business, but God's

Here's some freedom: what religious people think about your body is not their business.

But here's the catch. It's easy to slide from "not their business" to "not anyone's business," and that includes God. When we close a part of our life to him, we stop growing there.

IF YOU FEEL DEFENSIVE

Some of us bristle at this subject: "Don't tell me what to do with my body." My advice is to pay attention to that feeling. The places we guard most closely are often where God most wants to work.

Made on purpose

I once watched a 6′7″, 400-pound lineman clear the way for a touchdown. That man was built for exactly that job. Imagine if he spent his career wishing he were small like his coach. He'd miss the point. Be who God made you to be, and invite him in. God made you for a purpose only you can fulfill, and you're also the only one who can sabotage it.

> *"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."*
>
> **PSALM 139:14 (NIV)**

> *"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 (NIV)**

GRACE FOR EVERY BODY

Injury, illness, age, or a body you were born with: none of that puts you outside God's care. He meets you exactly where you are. For some, getting up and walking to the mailbox is a real spiritual victory.

TRY THIS

Is there an area you've quietly told God is off-limits? Food, drinking, sleep, your schedule? Name it, and invite him in.

In one sentence: Honoring God with your body means letting him into every part of your life.

7

Myth vs. Truth

LIVING IT OUT · CHAPTER 7 OF 9

Here are some common things we tell ourselves, and what the four steps say instead.

MYTH: “My body is my own business.”

Truth: It may be no one else’s business, but it is God’s.

MYTH: “What matters is my heart. Caring about my body is just vanity.”

Truth: Body and spirit can’t be separated. Both belong to God.

MYTH: “God will keep me here as long as he wants, so my habits don’t matter.”

Truth: Our choices affect our health and how long we’re able to serve.

MYTH: “I just need to lose weight before the reunion.”

Truth: Short-term goals tend to bring short-term results. Aim to be useful to God.

MYTH: “If I can’t do much, it doesn’t count.”

Truth: Small steps count. God meets you where you are.

MYTH: “It’s just a donut.”

Truth: Small choices add up. As I like to say, “Sometimes a donut has eternal consequence.”

Words to remember

“Something has to die for something else to live.”

“It’s probably not my business,
but it is God’s business.”

“A conclusion is the last thought you
think when you’re done thinking.”

And one for a smile. I’ll admit leg day doesn’t come easy: “I have to wear two wallets if I want to look like I have glutes.”

8

The 7-Day Challenge

LIVING IT OUT · CHAPTER 8 OF 9



One small step each day. Check them off as you go.

☐ **Day 1: Hand over the keys.** Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 and pray, "Lord, this house is Yours."

☐ **Day 2: Name your why.** Finish this sentence: "I want to take care of my body so that I can ____."

☐ **Day 3: Find your window.** Look at your calendar and find 20

minutes. What can you set aside to make room?

☐ **Day 4: Move in a way you enjoy.** Take a walk, ride a bike, visit the gym. Don't compare.

☐ **Day 5: Ask "Should I?"** Pick one food or drink you have often, and ask whether it helps you or holds you back.

☐ **Day 6: Pair body and spirit.** Listen to Scripture, a sermon or worship music while you move.

☐ **Day 7: Open the door.** Ask God where you've been guarded, and invite him in. Then tell a friend what you've learned this week.

THE SQUEEZE TEST

My favorite experiment: take a donut, or a rolled-up slice of pizza, squeeze it, and watch what comes out. Then ask yourself whether you'd want that in your body.

One warning: don't try it at a restaurant.

Four questions before you choose

1. **Can I?** Is it within the boundaries?
2. **Should I?** Is it the best choice, not just an acceptable one?
3. **Will it help?** Will it give me more energy, more years or more readiness for God's purpose?
4. **Who am I doing this for?** God, or the mirror?

9

Talk It Over

LIVING IT OUT · CHAPTER 9 OF 9

Use these with a small group, or on your own with a cup of coffee. They follow the four steps in order.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever heard “your body is a temple” used to shame someone? How has that shaped the way you read this passage?
2. If God walked through your “rented house” today, is there a room you’d rather he skip?

STEP 1 · BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

3. Judgment, sin, your past, or other people’s expectations: which do you most need freedom from right now?

STEP 2 · NOT YOUR OWN

4. Whose approval about your body or appearance have you been living for?
5. What’s one healthy activity you genuinely enjoy?

STEP 3 · A TEMPLE

6. Where might you be looking the part spiritually without doing the work?

7. Choose one everyday habit. How do “Can I?” and “Should I?” lead to different answers?

STEP 4 · HONOR GOD

8. Why do you think this subject makes people defensive?
9. Energy, longevity or purpose: which one motivates you most, and why?
10. What’s one step the Holy Spirit may be nudging you toward this week?

> **A CLOSING PRAYER**
>
> *Father, my body is not my own. You bought it at a price, and Your Spirit lives here. Help me be honest about my excuses and gentle with myself where I’ve fallen short. Show me one step to take this week, and give me the strength to follow through. Not for my glory, but so I can be fully useful for Yours. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

Go deeper

Read in the NIV: 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 · 1 Corinthians 7:23 · Romans 12:1–2 · Acts 1:8 · John 16:7–15 · Psalm 139 · Ephesians 2:10 · 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

Watch the sermons: Rented House, Part 1 · Rented House, Part 2

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.