

## “WHICH SUPPLEMENT DO I TAKE?”

March 30, 2025

Psalm 32

It seems like there is **a pill** for everything nowadays: a pill to lose weight, a pill to grow hair, a pill to wake up, a pill to go to sleep, a pill to live longer, a pill to relieve pain. Judging from the global pharmaceutical market, which was estimated at around \$1.6 trillion in 2023, we like the idea of taking a pill for what ails us. And those are just the drugs your doctor orders. If we look at the **global dietary supplement industry**, its estimated worth is approximately \$258 billion for this year. That’s a lot of supplements!

The largest market for supplements is North America with the Asia Pacific area right behind. **Vitamins and minerals** are the biggest segment with about \$70 billion estimated income and **Sports nutrition** sells an estimated \$40 billion.

People take these supplements because they want to be healed, to feel better, to perform at a certain level and to age well. The irony is most of these products are not FDA approved, they are not regulated for quality and consistency, and much of the research is based on people opinion, not scientific proof.

The greater irony is that scientists and researchers have said for years that if we want to maintain our health and feel better we need the following prescription:

- **Exercise regularly:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week. Get up and move every 30 minutes.
- **Eat a balanced diet:** Focus on consuming whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and healthy fats. Get rid of processed foods.
- **Stay Hydrated** – drink enough water.
- **Get enough sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night.

- **Manage stress:** Find healthy ways to cope with stress, such as exercise, meditation, or yoga.
- **Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption:** Quitting each is even better.

Of course, going to the gym, making healthy meals, and managing our stress takes some effort. It is easier to just take a pill.

Well it may surprise you to know that **King David** is interested in his people's health and well-being also. The very first verse in **Psalm 32** is David's recipe for happiness. "**Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**" Now I am willing to bet if I took a survey this morning, asking you to define what makes for a happy life, no one would come up with David's statement. While forgiveness is desirable this is probably not how we would define a happy or blessed life. **But perhaps, maybe we should.** Could it be that happiness has less to do with our circumstances and more to do with our spiritual health?

## I. THE **BODY SPIRIT CONNECTION**

I have heard people tell me, "**My week doesn't feel right when I miss worship.**" And according to a blog called **Health Connection**, "**People with a strong faith who practice their faith feel good after they attend services or perform their regular devotions. They feel "whole," happy, and focused.**" **Have you ever thought about why that might be?** The main concept behind the mind-body-spirit connection is that we are all more than just our thoughts. We are also our bodies, our emotions, and our spirituality ... all these things combine to give us identity, determine our health, and make us who we are. If this is true, then what affects our spirits also affects our body and our mental state. If we are not feeling well, could part of the cause be something spiritual?

David seems to think so. **“While I kept silent, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.”** The biblical people did not divide their souls into various pieces like we tend to. If one was in poor health, they were more likely to seek a priest not a doctor. Look how Jesus operated.

Remember the story of the **Paralytic Man** who was lowered on a mat through the roof. Jesus **first** tells him his sins are forgiven. Then he heals the man. Much of his ministry involved dealing with possession and the demonic – spiritual battles that affecting the mind and body. Even in our **first scripture** reading this morning **Paul** declares we are a new creation, everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! Then he states, **“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”** Reconciliation means a broken or strained relationship has been put right, by forgiveness of sin, and that sets the stage for a new start, a new life.

I have to wonder how many of our physical ailments are connected to our sin. How many people are walking around weighed down by guilt, regret, shame, an unforgiving spirit, anger, distraction, in other words, past sin and it is manifesting itself in physical conditions? And until they deal with this stuff, they are never going to be whole nor happy. Perhaps we should pay more attention to the state of our spirits.

## II. THE FIRST STEP

One of the joys of fishing, hiking, and kayaking is the gift of silence. One can do all these activities without talking, just listening to the sounds of the world and observing nature. There is a time for that kind of **silence** in our spiritual life, however, this is not one of them. David speaks, **“Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I**

**did not hide my iniquity; I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”** David’s message is that those who conceal sin will not prosper and those who confess and forsake their sin will obtain mercy.

Confession is the simple pill that begins our spiritual healing process. Confession is a powerful act, but it doesn’t work in silence. By the way, remorse is not confession, it is just the feeling of regret for doing wrong. **The silence must be broken.** Confession knocks down the door of our hiding in the shadows. Confession is an act of faith that places us as sinners in need of God’s grace. It is the first step in our spiritual journey because it is a confession of how much we need God in our lives. It is not by chance that we place the **Prayer of Confession** near the beginning of worship, because we can’t really enter into worship without confessing our need for God and our own fallenness. Our happiness begins with Confession and reconnecting with God. But things get even better.

### **III. THE BENEFITS OF CONFESSION**

David tells us about the many benefits of confession. The first is our sins are covered.

**A. Sins Covered** – treated as though we have not sinned. Our transgression is forgiven, and God does not bring it up again. Satan might, but God does not rub it in our face. It’s like the man who said, **“Whenever my wife and I get into an argument she gets historical.”** God does not beat us over the head about our past nor get historical. The sin is covered over by God’s steadfast and faithful love. Notice that David doesn’t mention sin again after verse 5. Why? Because things are different with those who acknowledge their sin and rely on the grace of God. That doesn’t mean there are not consequences, and it is quite likely we might have to make

reparations for our wrongs, but the heavy hand of God is removed, and we are free to serve and love once again.

## **B. Self-Awareness**

Did you ever have the eye doctor test your **peripheral**, or side to side vision? The doctor will have you look straight ahead and hold her hand beside your head. Then she will ask you when you become aware of her hand. At first her hand is in your blind spot, that area outside your vision.

David writes, “**Happy are those...in whose spirit there is no deceit.**” In other words, blessed are those whose blind spots are revealed, who stop lying to themselves. The worst kind of deceit is the lies we tell ourselves. Lies about how important we are, lies that we can do whatever we want without consequence, lies about how wonderful we are, lies that we are all powerful and invulnerable, lies that we don’t need help, and the worst deceit of all is thinking we don’t need God.

Confession has the power to shine a light on our blind spots, all the little lies that we don’t want to see and acknowledge. It brings to us self-awareness that we are not as good and charming and wonderful as we like to think. Confession helps us live into the truth.

## **C. Come under God’s Guardianship**

**Car lane correct** – Do any of you have that lane correction feature on your automobile? Whenever you veer too far to the left or right, the car will gently pull you back to the center of the lane. With all the curvy roads in PA, I find this feature to be irritating. Besides that, I don’t want my car to tell me how to drive nor feel like I am not in control. I have been driving this way all my life, leave me alone. So I turn that feature off.

Turning the lane correct feature off for driving is okay, but I believe most of us need a **lane correction for our spiritual life**. We have this tendency to veer off the path. Confession helps us to auto correct in two ways.

David wrote, **“You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.”**

Confession places us **under God’s guardianship**. Instead of rebelling we begin cooperating with God. When God is in control of our lives, we discover that God preserves, God delivers, God guides, and life gets a whole lot better. Sin is missing out on the true goal of life. But when we confess, and let God be God, then we experience the blessed life.

David continues, **“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”** The second benefit of Confession and letting God do some spiritual lane correction is we get a **personal spiritual trainer**. When we humble ourselves then we are ready to learn, to grow, to be guided, and gain understanding. Jesus promises to send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct us toward a healthy spiritual lifestyle. Confession opens us to God’s instruction because we are trusting more in God than in self.

#### **D. ALLOWS THE STEADFAST LOVE OF GOD INSIDE**

Lastly, notice this Psalm ends in joy. **“Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.”** The end of confession is Joy. It may begin with tears of sorrow and heaviness, but once the weight is lifted and we’ve entered the restorative love of God then we experience a renewal of the spirit that brings us **great joy**.

#### **IV. THE EXAMEN**

We have a **vacuum cleaner** that collects the dirt in a container near the handle. The Container has a latch that allows you to easily dump the dirt in the trash. However, there is a second chamber in the handle that also needs attention. In this chamber there is a sponge like air filter. It prevents dust from clogging up the vacuum, but if you ignore that sponge, and don't wash it out, the effective pick up of the vacuum cleaner greatly diminishes. It's like the vacuum cleaner can't breathe.

One of the spiritual practices I came across is called the **Examen**. It was a prayer taught by **St. Ignatius of Loyola** to help us reflect on our day and our relationship with God. He considered it the most important daily prayer. The Examen is done in the evening with the intent of looking back at your day through the eyes of Christ. In it you express gratitude, pray for awareness, review the day, considering how you can know God better, look forward to tomorrow, and concluding with the Lord's prayer.

The examen is like cleaning that vacuum air filter only it cleans the soul daily by alerting us to areas of immaturity, noticing God's work in our lives, and getting rid of any dirt we might have accumulated along the way. It is a way of taking a daily spiritual inventory so as to not carry baggage into the next day. It helps to keep our soul clean so we might work more effectively with God.

Truth is that most people don't need a spiritual pill, they just need the will to get out and do what's right for their souls. There's no magic pill out there that can curb the human appetite for self-indulgence and no pharmaceutical miracle that one can ingest to heal a sin-sick soul. For that we need a prescription from the Scriptures, the exercise of Confession. Why not give it a try? After all, it was designed for a healthier spirit. **Amen.**

# First Presbyterian Church in Hawley

## Sunday, March 30, 2025

### Second Scripture Lesson

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#### Psalm 32

<sup>1</sup>Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup>Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup>While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

<sup>6</sup>Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.

<sup>7</sup>You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah

<sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

<sup>9</sup>Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

<sup>10</sup>Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.

<sup>11</sup>Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be To God.**