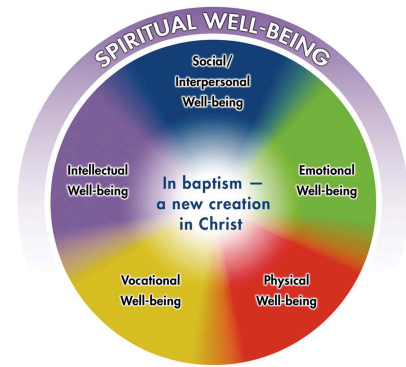


Purpose

From the Bethany Lutheran Church Health and Wellness Cabinet

"I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." – (Romans 9:17)



Copyright 1997 InterLutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Does being healthy and well have a purpose other than feeling good? Depending on your experience you may already have an idea of what its purpose is for you. The question of the purpose of health and wellness is certainly worth some thought – if nothing else it helps answer the question of whether pursuing health and wellness is worth our effort. And if we get into the question, there are a number of other questions that go along with one as deceptively simple as “What is its purpose?” Questions such as “What is it for?” or “Who is it for?”

There is very much a growing awareness that health and wellness is more than just not being sick. I asked a health care professional recently to tell me what the purpose of health is. Her reply was wonderful. “Health,” she said “ensures an optimal life experience within the choices for health that are given to us.” In other words, health gives us power within the limitations of our physical beings.

Although we may envision health as a worthy pursuit in its own right, health makes other things possible. It enables us. Granger Westberg, author of the book *The Parish Nurse*, wrote, “In the Christian tradition . . . good health is not an end in itself, but rather it is an enabler. It gives us the energy and vitality to serve and love others, and thus good health is seen in the context of purpose. It is a liberator.”

If you search the Internet these days for the purpose of wellness you will find a myriad of definitions and the concept of balance figures prominently in many of them. Balance in many discussions of wellness involves the recognition that health and wellness includes not just physical health but also emotional health. And, as we have seen, those are two aspects of health and wellness that bring us purpose.

The question of who health and wellness is for brings us to consider a third aspect of health and wellness. It seems to have an obvious answer at first, because health is about us first, with family coming in a close second, right? And of course good health enables us to have the resources to reach out to others in the world that are less fortunate.

But to make any answer about the purpose of health and wellness truly meaningful we also have to ask what spiritual purpose health and wellness brings to us as people and family members who are Christians. And considering the question in that light brings us to a deeper understanding of the question of who health and wellness serves. Westberg’s daughter, Jill McNamara, writes, “Health enables us to respond to the lure of God, to act on possibilities that are open to us and that lead to fulfillment.” (*Health and Wellness, 1990.*)

Wellness enables wonder for and service to the world that God has given us, and

fulfills our purpose. So you might say that health gives us the power to act, and wellness liberates our hope and faith -- thus enabling us to act to God's purpose. Health and wellness liberate us to be agents of God. As health and wellness are gifts from God, for which we have responsibility, we are blessed with the opportunity to pursue them and use them to His purpose. - JL

© 2010 Bethany Lutheran Church, Denver, Colorado – To request permission to reprint this column call 303-758-2820 or navigate to <http://www.bethany-denver2.org/about-us/contact/>