

What Your Body Knows About God: How We Are Designed to Connect, Serve and Thrive
Available November 2014

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Designed For Spirituality and Communion

What inspires you to pursue God, love others and live as God designed? In his new book, award-winning journalist Rob Moll explores the science of spirituality and how it motivates everyday people to follow the extraordinary.

What Your Body Knows About God shows that everyone has a biological ability to connect to God through spiritual experiences and by caring for other people. Inspiring readers to take action, both personally and communally, Moll shows how readers can enhance their relationship with God and their connections to other people.

“As I was working on my last book, I saw how important it was to hold our bodies with some reverence and awe. This sense of wonder led me to investigate the spiritual capacities of our bodies,” writes Moll, who has written extensively on health and health-care issues, and whose work has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Christianity Today*, *Books & Culture*, and *Leadership Journal*.

Moll’s first book, *The Art of Dying*, recovered the Christian practice of dying well through a base of journalistic research and pastoral sensitivity. Moll explored traditions for the “good death,” providing insight into death and dying issues with in-person reporting and interviews with hospice workers, doctors, nurses, bioethicists, family members and spiritual caregivers.

Similarly, *What Your Body Knows About God* uses neuroscience research to show how our brains develop and adapt when engaged in spiritual practices. Exploring the fascinating ways in which our brains and bodies interact with God and spiritual realities, Moll’s book outlines the ways in which God designed our bodies to love him and serve others, with research showing that when we seek God we can live a more meaningful, healthy and enjoyable life.

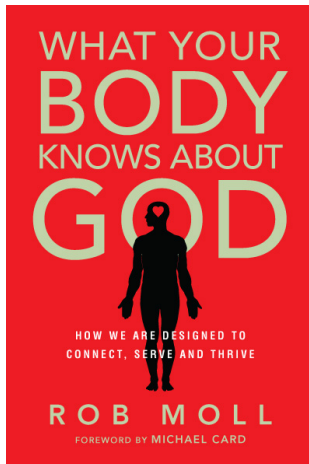
“For years one Christian leader after another has contended that redemption is holistic – not just the soul but also the body, not just me but us, not just my spirituality but also my sexuality,” writes Scot McKnight, professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary. “These contentions have now been backed up by solid research at the level of neurochemicals and how our bodies work. *What Your Body Knows About God* is a godsend book for a day that both needs and requires a deeper perception of holistic redemption. God, in effect, has wired us to love God, to love ourselves, and to love others – and this book explains how God did the wiring. Bravo!”

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The Social Network

There is another way in which our relationships with other people affect us. It's clear that our friends, family, coworkers and others with whom we directly relate have powerful effects on who we are, the things we believe, our commitments to faith and family, our desires, and even how we perceive the world around us. In addition, people who are two and even three degrees removed from us can exert influence in our lives.

Our friends' friends can change who we are—even the kind of relationships our friends have with their friends. It makes a difference what kinds of relationships our family members have with one another, regardless of our individual relationship with each member. We are even affected by the structure of the social network we inhabit, whether we are lightly connected to a number of different and unconnected groups, for example, or deeply connected to just one or two groups.

One economist found that the likelihood of your becoming a parent dramatically increases in the two years after one of your siblings has a baby. The study of eight thousand families found that not only are you likely to start your family soon after your sibling has a baby, but you're likely to have more kids. In other words, if you'd planned to have two children by age thirty-five and your sister starts having children at twenty-five, you may end up having three children by thirty-two. The effects are similar in non-Western countries.

There is a whole range of ways our friends and family and their friends and family influence us. We give away more money when our coworkers do—even when we don't know their giving habits. You gain in happiness by about 15 percent when your friend's friend is happy; that's about the same effect as for gaining eighty thousand dollars. We will tend to lose weight when our friends' friends do. I have seen this personally after a friend introduced me to the workout room at the office. He got me going, and my coworkers saw me sweaty after lunch and started joining us.

If you are married, consider how you found your spouse. Finding a mate is just one way our network affects us, but it provides a way to look at the structure of that network. The size of our network matters. The more friends and family (who can introduce us to their friends) we have, the more potential spouses we have the opportunity to meet. But its structure also matters, as does where we stand in that network. If we are loosely connected to a number of people, our connections are constantly shifting and our friends behave similarly in their own networks. Thus we are very likely to come across a number of people to whom we might be attracted. On the other hand, if we are tightly bonded to just a few people (even within a large network) and they are tightly linked to others with little flow, our chances of finding a spouse diminish. Even through dating websites that offer varying levels of anonymity, some

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BOOK EXCERPT



Rob Moll is an award-winning journalist and editor-at-large with *Christianity Today*. He has written extensively on health and health-care issues, investing and personal finance, religion and rural America. His work has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Profitable Investing*, *Books & Culture* and *Leadership*. He has also served as a hospice volunteer. Moll serves World Vision as communications officer to the president and lives in the Seattle area.

people who eventually marry may discover a previous loose connection to each other.

We need both strong and loose ties to others, not only in our personal lives but also economically. The financial and innovative engines of cities have been linked to the many loose ties they foster. People come across new ideas and spread them quickly. They move from job to job, picking up new skills and sharing them with new companies. At the same time, people need some stability in order to get to know those with whom they are working with and understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Brian Uzzi, a professor at Northwestern University, studied the networks of those who put on Broadway musicals. He found that the ideal network for success was one with lots of tight cliques with connections between them. When people worked together too often, they lost their creative edge, unable to use new ideas. On the other hand, when people hadn't worked together enough, they didn't know how to work together and their shows flopped. Success depended on a tight core group with some fresh blood.

A wide variety of connections opens new worlds to us, gives us new opportunities and exposes us to different kinds of people with unique tastes and ideas. If you are job hunting or looking for a new doctor, seeking out a church or a good friend, the possibilities open to you through acquaintances, coworkers and casual friendships can help you discover what you need. Further, broad and shallow connections are especially useful because they give us increased opportunities to develop what we *most* need: deep and lasting relationships. Knowing others and being known by them, supporting and caring for others and receiving that same support, are essential for our happiness.

– Taken from chapter four, “Life Together”