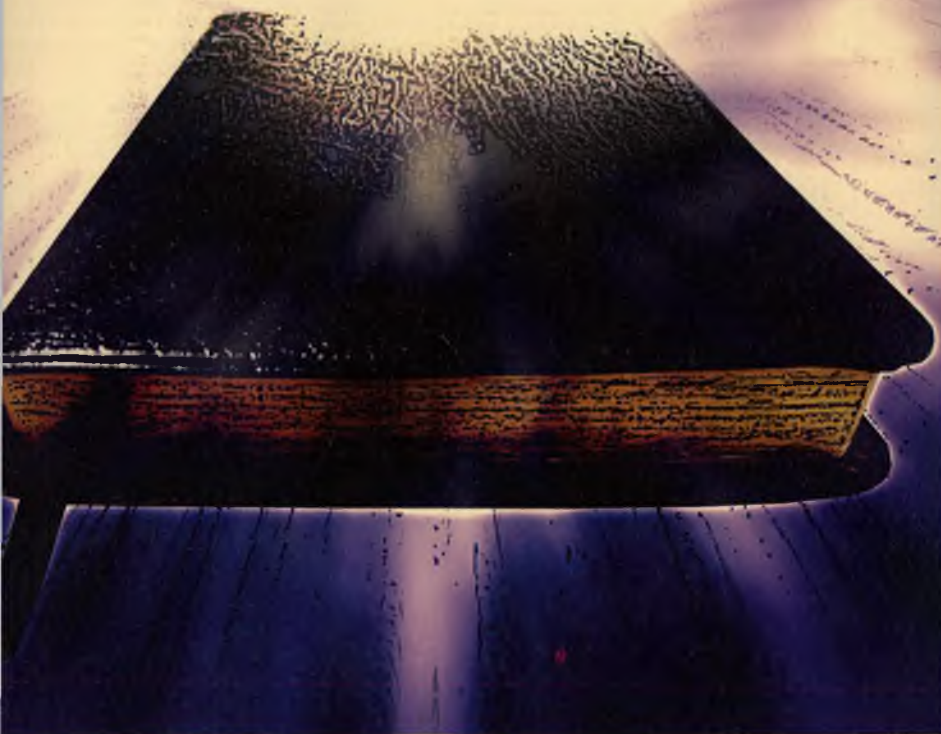


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Collegiate Quarterly


2010
April-June

health and healing



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide for Young Adults

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Health and Healing

april-june 2010

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Health and Healing

- 10 *Lesson One Praise God From Whom All Blessings **Flow!***
Venice Brooks, Teka-Ann Haynes, Ralna M. Simmonds, Marcia Na'Tricia Smith, Kamala Glenn-Taylor, Deia and Nathan Williams
- 19 *Lesson Two The Power of **Choice***
Villanueva Asis, Jerome B. Balbastro, Jervenesence Salathiel O. Florece, Lyka Manalo, Mariel Joyce L. Perez, Sandro A. Dela Roca
- 28 *Lesson Three Celebrating Spiritual and Physical **Fitness***
Choo Shi En Christon, Jonathan Gerber, Jimmy Quek, Lionel See Yun Song, Nathaniel Tan, Faith Toh
- 37 *Lesson Four The Water of **Life***
Jason Hammel, Carrie Purkeypile, Ashley Trecartin, Deena Bartel-Wagner, Gary Wagner, Jordan Wagner
- 46 *Lesson Five The **Environment***
Emily Helen Adams, Stephanie Honrada, Erin Johnson, Raquel Molina, Michael Riess, Christy Yingling
- 55 *Lesson Six Faith and **Healing***
Falvo Fowler, Jill Manoukian, David Dane Ricky, Dwayne Dharma Ricky, Eko Tulistyawati Ricky, Gustina Waro Lisa Ricky
- 64 *Lesson Seven Rest and **Restoration***
Robert Bennett, Courtney-Claire Haynes, Jenine Knibb, Latoya Natalie McFarlane, Rita Ann Newman, Ryan O'Neil Seaton



- 73 *Lesson Eight The Atmosphere of **Praise***
Alexis Boddy, Amanda Ernst, Nathan Ernst, Karen Pires, Jessica Marie White, Sarah White
- 82 *Lesson Nine **Temperance***
Vanessa Geita, Roboam Kakap, Benedict Oli, Janalee Shaw, Joy Josephine Torato, Gina Renee Wahlen
- 91 *Lesson Ten Integrity: Wholeness and **Holiness***
Kay Brock, Bonnie Head, James G. Moon, Timothy J. Pellandini, Andres Saenz, Lani Tomagan-Willis
- 100 *Lesson Eleven Optimism: Happiness and **Healing***
Marcus Leeland, Isaac Nyakundi Mokaya, Sarah Kwamboka Monyoncho, Opuge Ephraim Obuolloh, Lukas Olwayo, Jackson Watembo
- 109 *Lesson Twelve Nutrition in the **Bible***
Ray Allen, Seth Allen, Wilona Karimabadi, Mark A. Kellner, De Laine Heinlein-Mayden, Gina Renee Wahlen
- 118 *Lesson Thirteen Social Support: The Tie That **Binds***
Nicketa Lawrence-Burchell, Chris Harper, Christopher Morrison, Michael-Henry Parchment, Stacy-Ann Reeves, Richard Wildman

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about looking beyond the abridged,
the instants, the clichés. It's
about discovering what God is
really trying to say to you.

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*This Quarter's **Illustrator***



Originally from Manila, Philippines, Kelvin dela Paz now resides in Guam, USA. He always has been interested in photography and graphic arts. God continues to provide opportunities so that he can develop the artistic talent given to him. He earned his math teaching degree at the University of the Philippines, and currently is pursuing his MA degree in education at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines. By the time you read this, he will be in his second year at Guam Adventist Academy teaching math.

He enjoys solving math problems, and his hobbies include sketching, gardening, and playing the piano, guitar, and violin. He is passionate about teaching and sharing his faith through his talents and abilities. God is the primary source of his inspiration and strength. In this picture with him is his family. He is grateful for the love, care, and support he gets from his wife, Marie, and their three year old son, Kurt.

In God's time, he plans to open a school in the rural areas of the Philippines that will accommodate children from less fortunate families. He believes that everybody deserves to receive the true education that brings restoration to our fallen characters.

Getting the Most Out of CQ

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the Adult Bible Study Guide find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

About four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflect the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 72,500.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.

3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.

4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:

"Introduction" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.

"Testimony" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

"How-To" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

"Exploration" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.

lesson one

MARCH 27-APRIL 3

Praise God From Whom All Blessings **Flow!**

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless

His holy name!" (Ps. 103:1, NKJV).



1 John 4:10

Introduction

*What Is in the Heart
of Love?*

"He doesn't love us 'cause of who we are, He only loves us 'cause of who He is." My radio was tuned to the campus station at Northern Caribbean University. I liked the funky yet somber tune, but the words were what really got to me. So I went to the station to ask about the song and the group performing it. They were the Newsboys—a band of four young adults who were nontraditional in their approach, but who were obviously aware of what grace is all about: God loving us, not because of who we are, but really and thankfully, because of who He is.

None of us can make God love us more or less.

Because of who He is? What do we make of that? First John 4:10 says, "This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us in sending his Son to be the way to take away our sins" (NCV). So basically, upon realizing what has been done to save us, we can praise God because He sent His Son to take away our sins!

Kay D. Rizzo shares the secret to moving beyond a religious facade—the legalistic works that we hope God and others will see as evidence of our goodness, but that, in reality, leave us empty and exhausted. She writes, "Praise puts our lives into a proper perspective with God. Our unworthiness glares at us in flashing neon lights when we measure our goodness up to God's."*

Like children, we often try to win God's favor with sweet smiles and even sweeter deals; but the truth is, none of us can make God love us more or less because His love is unconditional. Praising Him, however, calls us to look outside of ourselves and the messes we've created to the bigger picture He wants us to see. The Hebrew word *yadah* means "to shout jubilation," while the word *hallel* means "to boast, celebrate, sing, glorify." When Rizzo started living out these words in her life, her life turned around.

What do you want to praise God for? Do you think that because your life might be a mess you have no reason to praise Him? I invite you to begin a regimen of praise today. Start by asking God to show you the bigger picture so that you will see the real message behind every mess and be able to praise Him from whom all blessings flow! As you do, notice how much better you'll feel—how your mental, spiritual, and physical health will improve!

*Kay D. Rizzo, *On Wings of Praise* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® 1996), p. 46.

Logos
*Heart, Mind, and
Actions*

Matt. 22:37, 38;
Rom. 12:1;
Eph. 2:8, 9; 5:2;
Col. 3:12, 13;
2 Tim. 1:8, 9;
1 John 4:10

When people are involved in sin, their hearts are set on impure things. Today we will study how the heart and mind affect the actions. Matthew 22:37, 38, talks about how we should love God with all of our hearts, minds, and souls. The other texts for today teach us that we show love to each other by our actions toward them. Interestingly, the heart affects the mind, which, in turn, affects the actions. Let us now look at each one of this important trio.

"Take me away with you—let us hurry!"

The Heart Loves and Feels Excitement

The heart longs, yearns, and lusts. The heart of a person in bondage to Satan loves to sin and feels excitement while sinning. Such a heart yearns after sin and is a slave to its cravings. The heart that is in sin will do anything to satisfy those cravings. This, in itself, is a form of idolatry, for our hearts should yearn for the Lord alone.

In contrast, the heart of one who is set free in Christ loves God and feels excitement over growing in righteousness. That heart earnestly desires to develop within itself holiness and purity. Colossians 3:1 instructs us to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (NKJV). In other words, we are to set our hearts on loving Christ. Involve your heart with Him. Become excited about Him, long to be with Him. Yearn for intimacy with Him, and fight for a closer walk with Him. Let the cry of the beloved be yours: "Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers" (Song of Solomon 1:4, NIV).

The heart that is ravished by Christ refuses to let Him go. Such a heart embraces Him and clings to Him. Let this be your goal!

"The Mind" Refers to Our Thoughts

The mind that is in sin continually thinks sinful thoughts. Sinful thoughts and images can interrupt our work, study time, family time, and all other areas of life. Let us always remember that the mind is a battlefield on which decisions are made, and that once we make a decision, our hearts usually follow.

Colossians 3:2 states, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (NIV). We are to think heavenly thoughts, thoughts about Christ and

God, thoughts about eternity and heaven. We are to discern whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy. In other words, we are to think about Christ (Phil. 4:8). The reason we are urged to do this is found in Colossians 3:3: "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (NIV). On the cross, Jesus died for us, but we also died in Him. Our old sinful natures hung on that tree with Christ. Perhaps I can say that my old heart that loved sin died 2,000 years ago. My mind that was consumed with sinful images was killed at the hands of Roman soldiers, and then my old sinful self was buried in a tomb.

What We Do Is Tied to What We Love and Think About

It is impossible to change our behavior unless we first change our heart. Being a Christian is about loving God passionately and having our thoughts consumed by Christ. We are not only to profess His love, we are to show His love to others by being kind and loving.

Furthermore, if we decide in our hearts to glorify God, then we are working in concert with Him, and He will enable us to do that which is good. This will ensure our success, because God Himself will come to our aid so that He will be glorified. Indeed, He is glorified in the daily choices we make to turn away from gratifying our flesh and to set our minds on Him. What motivates us as Christians is to honor the Lord in everything, including our freedom from impurity.

So today we have seen how heart, mind, and actions are tied together and that we are to love God by setting our hearts and minds on things above so that we can die to sinful actions and learn to love one another. This is a summary of the Christian's life: We are to set our hearts toward loving God, and our thoughts are to dwell on Christ. Then, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are able to live worthy of the sacrifice made on the cross.

Praise God! For we are given the strength to do all of the above through His Son, Jesus Christ!

REACT

1. Read Exodus 20:4, 5. How does this commandment relate to today's lesson?

2. Why must the heart, mind, and behavior work together in order for us to gain spiritual freedom?

3. Matthew 22:39 teaches us that we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Why is it impossible to love others if we do not love ourselves? How do we love ourselves in a Christian sense rather than a worldly sense?

4. What do the following texts teach us about the importance of how we regard others: Isaiah 58; Matthew 25:31–46?

"Love With Everything You've Got"

Matt. 22:37, 38

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10."¹

"This love is . . . as broad as the world."

"Those who would be worshipers of the true God must sacrifice every idol. Jesus said to the lawyer, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.' Matthew 22:37, 38. The first four precepts of the Decalogue allow no separation of affections from God. Nor must anything share our supreme delight in Him. We cannot advance in Christian experience until we put away everything that separates us from God."²

"Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others. . . . This love is not contracted so as merely to include 'me and mine,' but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love cherished in the soul sweetens the entire life and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown."³

REACT

1. Christian love is more of a principle than a feeling. So then if we neglect the emotional aspect of love from its physical and emotional worldly counterparts, how do we display love for God and for others?

2. If praise is the result of a relationship with God, how do we reconcile our negative emotions with Jesus' plea to love Him with all our hearts, souls, and minds? Can we truly praise God if we are unhappy, judgmental, and resentful? Explain your answer.

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

2. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 329.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 223, 224.

Evidence

Ps. 103:1

The Heart of the Psalmist/Psalms— the Universal Language

If nothing else, David knew how to praise God. However, we cannot even begin to understand the depth and actual expressions of his praise until we understand a bit about who he was—a man whose experiences with God were such that they made him a psalmist.

David's psalms of praise are our universal language.

There abided in David a deep affection for God, which he expressed through his worship. This shepherd-boy-turned-king lived a life of trust and trouble, reconciliation and relief. Much of his work in the book of Psalms portrays him as either confessing with a contrite heart or praising with a purposeful spirit. If David understood nothing else about God, he understood His mighty power. David's use of strong, encompassing words such as *all*, when he says, "Bless the Lord . . . and *all* that is within me," shows not only the magnitude of his affection, but also his understanding of God's greatness. He believes it will take *all* that is within him to bless the name of God.

What really fascinates me, however, is the fact that the psalms of David are applicable to *all* humanity. David wrote poems and songs that are universal. For centuries, the Jews and the Christian Gentiles used psalms for private prayer and public devotion, while the Hebrews used David's psalms for their formal liturgy. Psalm 103 was used on special occasions in the temple for atonement. Jesus quoted from the books of Psalms and Isaiah more than any other books in the Old Testament.

The contemporary use of psalms is similar. His psalms are used for public and private devotions, they are printed in church hymnals, and they are relevant to all Christians, irrespective of age, experience, race, educational background, or religious affiliation. David's psalms of praise are our universal language—our *all*. "The psalms of David pass through the whole range of experience, from the depths of conscious guilt and self-condemnation to the loftiest faith and the most exalted communing with God."* Truly, David's psalms of praise can help to heal our hearts and point us toward home.

REACT

1. Read all of Psalm 103. Then go back to verse 2, where we are urged to remember all of God's benefits. What does David say those benefits are?
2. How might writing your own psalms of praise set your feet upon the path of both spiritual and physical wellness?

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 754.

How-to A Living Sacrifice

Rom. 12:1;
Col. 3:12, 13

Our bodies were created by our heavenly Father who took much delight in creating us. Once sin entered this world, maintaining the health of our bodies became problematic. Many people wonder why sickness exists. It exists because of the presence of sin, and it will continue to exist until God returns to take us home.

**“Nothing tends more to promote health . . .
than does . . . praise.”**

Sickness occurs in many ways. There are irritating influenzas and colds, nagging aches and pains. Cancer, autism, bipolar disorders. The list of serious diseases that threaten minds and bodies the world over is endless and continues to grow to the point where it seems ridiculous that Paul should counsel us to “present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1, NRSV). Yet our efforts to maintain the healthiest body and mind possible do not go unnoticed by our Creator. In fact, He has even given us guidance regarding how best to do so. Following are a few steps we can take to follow some of His directives regarding our health:

Eat a balanced diet. Such a diet includes a combination of carbohydrates, healthy fats, protein, and a variety of fruits and vegetables. One easy tip to remember is to eat foods that are the color of the rainbow. Sometimes it is wise to keep a journal of the foods you eat each day. This is an easy way to notice what good foods are missing from your diet.

Make time for exercise. Combining aerobic and anaerobic routines will keep your heart strong as well as improve your lean body mass. Once again, keeping a journal of your daily/weekly physical activities will help you to see where you need to improve.

Drink fresh water. Eight glasses of water is the most often recommended amount. Remember that caffeine depletes the body of water and that sodas do not count as part of the eight glasses.

Read the Bible, pray, and praise God. Communicating daily with our Creator is vital to maintaining spiritual well-being. “Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray.”* Consider keeping a prayer and praise journal.

* *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251.

1 Pet. 2:9

Opinion

Living the Praise

Being thankful describes our attitude toward God for what He has done, while praise is offered for who God is. Psalm 18:3 says, "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised" (NKJV). We were created to praise God. Matthew 22:37 tells us to love God with all our hearts, souls, and strength. Praise is expressed through actions and love for Him.

Stormie Omartian said that praise is the prayer that changes everything. She further stated that praise and worship is the purest form of prayer, because it focuses our minds and souls entirely away from ourselves and on God. It communicates pure love, devotion, reverence, appreciation, and thankfulness to God. It is exalting God for who He is, and communicating our longing for Him.*

Live the praise!

At many points in our Christian walk, we will find ourselves dealing with trials. Being a Christian does not grant us immunity from these experiences. However, being able to praise God through them helps us to be victorious. In 2 Chronicles 20, we find the story of how King Jehoshaphat praised God when he heard that his enemies were rising up to destroy him and Israel. Take time now to read this marvelous chapter.

What a great example King Jehoshaphat and the Israelites are for us. Their words and acts of praise in the face of war teach us that the battle against sin is really God's, that we do not need to be afraid or dismayed. How wonderful to be able to fight, not with weapons of destruction, but with songs and instruments of praise. We are assured through God's Word that He is with us and that blessings will appear when we lift our praises to Him.

I am moved at God's marvelous wonders. There are times when words fail to express my gratitude to a God who made heaven and earth; but through the power of the Holy Spirit, I can lift my hands and heart to praise Him.

He has given us more blessings than we deserve. As Ephesians 2:8, 9 tells us, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (NIV). Let us therefore live the praise and see the difference in our personal lives.

REACT

How can you be thankful when you are feeling either physical or mental pain?

*Stormie Omartian, *The Prayer That Changes Everything* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2004).

Mind Conditioning = Healthy Spiritual Living

Rom. 12:1, 2

CONCLUDE

In Romans 12:1, Paul pleads with us to dedicate our bodies to God because of His great mercy toward us. He says that this is a sacrifice He will accept, and that it is a good way to worship Him. Then in verse 2, He tells us not to imitate the behavior and customs of the world, but to let God transform us into new persons by changing the way we think. Clearly then, if we are to worship God in our hearts and with our actions, we need to pay as much attention to the conditioning of our minds—on God's Word—as we do on paying attention to nurturing our bodies. We won't be transformed without a renewing of the mind!

CONSIDER

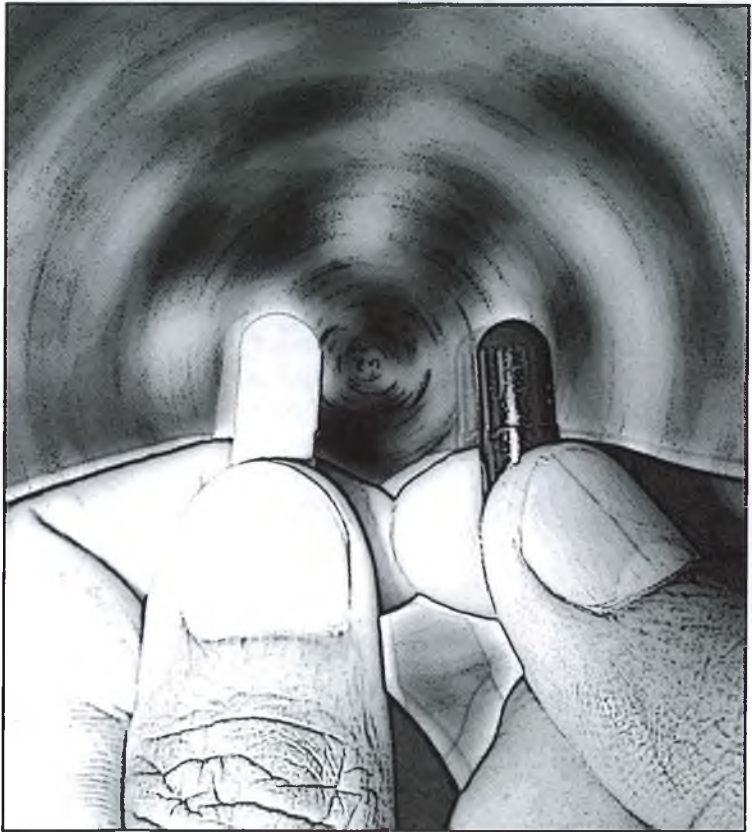
- Reading Psalm 103. David was called a man after God's own heart. Notice how in Psalms he is constantly meditating upon God's Word and praising Him. List all attitudes, actions, and attributes that David credits to God on behalf of His people. Make your own list of the ways God has manifested His grace in your life.
- Writing your own psalm or song of prayer and praise to God. To do this, use the list you developed in the above task. Or paraphrase one of your favorite psalms.
- Expressing your love and gratitude to God by doing "secret" random acts of kindness throughout the week to people who seem to need their spirits lifted. For example, leave a flower or piece of candy on the desk of a fellow student or coworker; leave a bag of groceries at the door of a neighbor, or someone you know to be in need; volunteer at a community shelter, or slip some money in an envelope and send it to someone in need without identifying yourself.
- Making a prayer list that includes neighbors, friends, family members, and church members you don't usually pray for. Keep them at the top of your prayer list (ahead of your own personal petitions) for a month. Watch how God works in their lives.
- Studying God's Word with the idea of using that time as mental conditioning for the spiritual battles you face daily. Let your study be mental exercise or "boot camp" for conditioning your spiritual walk.
- Witnessing to others about the love and power of Christ in you as your means of worthiness. Let His love and sacrifice be your confidence in claiming His promises.

CONNECT

Joyce Meyer, *Battlefield of the Mind*.

The Power of **Choice**

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank” (Dan. 1:8, NKJV).



Introduction

Making the Right Choice

Gen. 2:16, 17;
Deut. 30:10-19

God created us as individuals capable of making decisions. We can analyze and categorize, but the query lingers today as it did in the Garden of Eden, "Is it evil, or is it good?"

I believe that what we are now and what we are to become depend on the choices we make. We may choose to remain silent in a particular situation or to speak forcefully in another. We must choose which god to serve, which foods to eat, which liquids to drink. Ultimately, what we choose is what we become as individuals.

I couldn't stand the idea that I had no choice but to obey.

During my high school years, I formally trained in a military course integrated in the curriculum. I had no choice but to enroll. Not taking the course meant I could not graduate. What I hated most about the program was General Orders Rule #2, which stated, "Obey first before you complain." Being inquisitive, I couldn't stand the idea that I had no choice but to obey, or else I would be punished by having to do any number of pushups my superior assigned. The strictness of this discipline still lingers as I realize the significance of obeying God.

Since the Fall, God reminds us over and again about making the right choices. He even provides parameters to help us restore His lost image as stated in Deuteronomy 30:10-19. In these verses, "Moses challenged Israel to choose life, to obey God, and therefore continue to experience his blessings. God doesn't force his will on anyone. He lets us decide whether to follow him or reject him. This decision, however, is a life-or-death matter. God wants us to realize this, for he would like us all to choose life. Daily, in each new situation, we must affirm and reinforce this commitment."*

If we obey His decrees written in the Book, we participate in the process of restoration. The Lord reveals to us principles for physical well-being to elevate our spiritual maturity. But do we have enough power to make the right choices? This is the focus of our study this week.

REACT

Think about choices you have made. How important were they?

* *Life Application Study Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Pub.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), p. 321.

1 Cor. 10:31

Evidence

Decisions Over the World's Temptations

As Christians, we know that our bodies are the temple of God. So we must take care of them the very best we can. But people sometimes choose to put things into their bodies that are not healthful. Perhaps they do so because they are depressed, and they hope that what they eat and drink or the drugs they take will make them feel better. Sometimes people drink in hopes of forgetting their problems. But tobacco and alcohol are both poisons and do a great deal of harm to one's body. These poisons increase the risk for behavior and brain-function disorders.

"Alcohol-dependent adolescents perform more poorly on tests of condition."

"Researchers found that alcohol-dependent adolescents perform more poorly on tests of condition. The effect of nicotine on adolescent brains reveals the following results: (1) chemical receptors for nicotine (a sign of addiction) increase twice as much in adolescents as in adults; and (2) nicotine exposure caused permanent behavioral problems, especially in females."*

On the other hand, healthful choices can powerfully effect positive changes in us. Regarding unhealthy foods, we know that meat contains cholesterol, which can cause many different diseases. That is why many people now choose to eat more vegetables, fruits, and other recommended healthful foods. They want to enjoy a good, long life. Because of their healthful diets, Seventh-day Adventists are known to live longer, healthier lives than people with other eating habits. Choosing to eat a healthful diet, to exercise, and to think good thoughts help us to sleep better and to have clearer minds.

God gave us the power of choice. We can use this power for good or for evil. We decide what to choose among the things that surround us. Whose steps should we follow? What kind of diet should we choose? It's good to know that God is always available to help us with every choice we encounter in our journey. When we face difficult choices regarding our health, remember that He is ready to guide us.

REACT

1. What are some biblical guidelines in choosing the foods we eat?
2. How can people at any age resist temptation?
3. Why did God give us the power of choice knowing that we would often choose unwisely?

*Elvira Galvez, "Alcohol, Nicotine and the Brain," *Sci-Tech Magazine*, vol. XIX, no. 4, pp. 12, 13.

The Power of Choice

Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1–13;
Deut. 30:10–19;
Ps. 119:11;
John 3:16;
Col. 3:2;
Heb. 11:8–10

The Fall (Gen. 3:1–13)

“In the midst of the garden, near the tree of life, stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This tree was especially designed of God to be the pledge of their [Adam and Eve’s] obedience, faith, and love to Him.”¹

God did not create us to be robots.

When Adam and Eve were placed in the beautiful Garden, they had everything for their happiness; but God chose to test their loyalty before they could have eternal security. Satan was permitted to test them. If they endured the trial, they would be in perpetual favor with God.

Eve found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the fruit of the forbidden tree. God had given her the freedom and wisdom to choose between good and evil. He had freely given her the good, but she was considering the evil. The tempter plucked the fruit and passed it to her. She received it, ate it, and was delighted with it. It seemed delicious to her taste. As soon as she disobeyed, she became a powerful medium through which the fall of her husband could occur. Here is where sin entered our world.

Freedom of Choice (Gen. 2:16, 17)

God instructed our first parents with regard to the tree of knowledge. He did not deprive them of the ability to eat the forbidden fruit. He left them as free moral agents to believe His word and obey His command. However, our first parents chose to believe the words of the serpent instead of believing in God. They basically distrusted His goodness in favor of cherishing the words of Satan.

God created humans with the power to think, to discern what is good and what is right. He did not create us to be robots. As a result, we have the freedom to choose and to decide what we will do with our lives. God wants us to exercise this power and freedom for our good and for His glory.

Wrong Choices and Their Results (Deut. 30:10–19)

“Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall.”²

We must not neglect the opportunity to study God's truths. They are given to save us from deception. Neglecting them will result in ruin. Every wrong choice has unpleasant and sometimes serious consequences; but when we hide God's Word in our hearts, when we learn to walk by Jesus' side, we will also learn how to make choices that are true to the faith we confess.

God's Choice (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20)

When Adam and Eve sinned, God set into motion the plan of salvation. This plan was conceived out of His love for us (John 3:16). Despite our sins, God loves us and wants to save us. That's why He sent His Son to die for us. Because we are valuable in His sight, He wants us to live happy, healthy, and holy lives. That's also why He wants us to choose to obey His will, to exercise the freedom of choice by choosing what is good for our bodies. Then we will be able to glorify Him with a redeemed body (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

"It is Paul's insistence that, though he is free to do anything, he will let nothing master him. The great fact of the Christian faith is, not that it makes a man free to sin, but that it makes a man free not to sin. It is easy to allow habits to master us; but the Christian strength enables us to master them. When a man really experiences the Christian power, he becomes, not the slave of his body, but its master. Often a man says, 'I will do what I like,' when he means that he will indulge the habit or passion which has him in its grip; it is only when a man has the strength of Christ in him that he can really say, '[I] will do what I like,' not, 'I will satisfy the things that have me in their power.'"³

REACT

1. How can you use the power of choice more wisely?
2. What might you be neglecting that would cause you to make unhealthful choices?
3. What basic mistake did Adam and Eve make, and how can you avoid making the same mistake?
4. How do we face temptations similar to those faced by Adam and Eve?
5. When Adam and Eve chose to sin, they blamed others for their poor choice. Do you ever find yourself blaming others for your poor choices? If so, why and how can you learn to take responsibility for your choices?
6. What does Hebrews 11:8–10 teach us about Abraham and the choices he made? What can you personally learn from those choices?
7. We want to make good choices, but when faced with difficult or tempting possibilities, we sometimes fail. How can we "program" our minds so that we can be more successful? (Ps. 119:11; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:2.)

1. *The Story of Redemption*, p. 24.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 55.

3. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 56, 57.

One Choice Out of Many Choices

Gen. 3:2

When we are puzzled about choosing the one right choice from among many choices, it can be like the shadows of a night haunted by the noise of crickets. From such a night, we might believe that everything is dark rather than reach for the sunrise as our decision unfolds.

Perhaps to choose is to be human.

One thing that requires good decision-making and can lead to either our “day” or our “night” is appetite. “In the wilderness of temptation Christ met the great leading temptations that would assail man. There He encountered, single-handed, the wily, subtle foe, and overcame him. The first great temptation was upon appetite; the second, presumption; the third, love of the world. Satan has overcome his millions by tempting them to the indulgence of appetite. Through the gratification of the taste, the nervous system becomes excited and the brain power enfeebled, making it impossible to think calmly or rationally. The mind is unbalanced. Its higher, nobler faculties are perverted to serve animal lust, and the sacred, eternal interests are not regarded.”¹

“The uncontrolled indulgence and consequent disease and degradation that existed at Christ’s first advent, will again exist, with intensity of evil, before His second coming.”²

“Indulgence of appetite would have involved the sacrifice of physical vigor, clearness of intellect, and spiritual power.”³

Satan may lurk all around us, but we need not fall as his prey. “Every man has the opportunity, to a great extent, of making himself whatever he chooses to be. The blessings of this life, and also of the immortal state, are within his reach. He may build up a character of solid worth, gaining new strength at every step. He may advance daily in knowledge and wisdom, conscious of new delights as he progresses, adding virtue to virtue, grace to grace. His faculties will improve by use; the more wisdom he gains, the greater will be his capacity for acquiring. His intelligence, knowledge, and virtue will thus develop into greater strength and more perfect symmetry.”⁴

Every religious philosophy deals with the concept of choice. Perhaps to choose is to be human. Whether we like it or not, the power of choice is ours. The main question is, How will we use that power?

1. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 151.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Gen. 1:29;
Ps. 23:3; 119:11;
Matt. 28:19, 20;
1 Cor. 10:31;
James 5:16;
Rev. 1:3

How-to Restoration

Our bodies are not ours. We are just stewards of them. Therefore, we need to treasure them. We can actually compare our bodies to photographs. Family pictures, for example, are treasures that can be damaged by water exposure, light exposure, and careless handling. If they are digital photos, they can be deleted accidentally or our computers can crash and lose them. When our pictures are damaged or lost, we try to restore them any way we can.

When our pictures are damaged or lost, we try to restore them any way we can.

How does sin damage us? And how can we restore ourselves? Here are some ways:

Scan pictures. The first step to restore photos is to scan them. This will be the mirror to help you to see all distortions. By returning to the original diet God has given you, you can restore your body (Gen. 1:29).

Save. After scanning, begin saving the parts of the photo that you have restored. Whenever you start to restore your body, always remember to have a goal and to keep that goal in mind. Save it in your memory, so you won't forget it (1 Cor. 10:31).

Fix flaws. The third step is finding what else you need to fix. Your whole body has been damaged because of sin. The only possible way to fix it is to ask the Lord for help (Ps. 119:11).

Remove marks and scratches. Adobe Photoshop Elements and Adobe Photoshop have dust and scratch filters that can delete imperfections. After restoring your body, temptations will still come your way. Two elements that will remove those temptations are prayer and the study of God's Word.

Print and archive. After you're done with all of the above steps, you're ready to print and archive the pictures. You're ready to share your living testimony and to be a more effective person in spreading the good news of Jesus' soon return (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Feelings in Lieu of Choices

Prov. 16:25;
Matt. 13:18–23

In an accounting refresher course, our instructor used the phrase *in lieu*. She told us that it means “as if,” “would have been,” or “assumed to be.” We were discussing the topic “cash received in lieu of stock dividends.” She explained how to recognize stock dividends when they are declared and received. However, a problem arises when cash is received in lieu of cash dividends. When this occurs, she said that the “as if” approach is to be followed. This means stock dividends are “assumed to be received” and “subsequently sold” to the cash received.

What if this were compared to our choices? Does this mean to say that our feelings are “assumed to be” the choices we make?

We all know that for every choice we make, there are consequences—either good or bad.

We all know that for every choice we make, there are consequences—either good or bad. However, sometimes people don’t take their choices seriously because they rely only on their feelings. They believe that it is better to make choices based on how they feel rather than on careful reasoning. We are sometimes blinded by our feelings to the point that we cannot see what the possible consequences of a choice could be.

Consider the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3–8. If we choose to hear God’s Word and accept it quickly and joyfully, but then do not allow His Word to take root in our lives, we shall quickly be swept away by trouble or persecution. God surely wants us to choose, instead, to take the seed that fell on good soil. He knows we will be more fruitful and profitable when the reaping time comes.

Our salvation depends on how we choose and what we choose. We should base our choices not on feelings but on principles and on Scripture. As we live out the Word in our lives, the correct choices will be made clear. It is not true that feelings are “in lieu” of choices. It is unsafe for us to rely on our feelings. Learn to obey God. It is His plan for us to live a life of usefulness.

REACT

1. What is the remedy or remedies for having made a wrong choice?
2. How can we evaluate God’s will if we are faced with several good choices?
3. When might there be a time when feelings should influence how we make a choice?

Deut. 30:19;
Josh. 24:15

Exploration *The Right Choice*

CONCLUDE

Today more than ever we protect our right to choose. We see the power to choose and to shape one's destiny as a basic human right. But while most of us have been given the opportunity to get behind the steering wheel of our lives, we often lack the wisdom to make sound choices. As Christians, we believe that God gave us freedom of choice not as a right but as a gift; and with that gift He also gave us in His Word guidelines on how to choose well.

CONSIDER

- Playing a word association game with a friend. Each of you write down whatever comes to your mind when you think of the words *choice*, *responsibility*, and *consequence*. Compare and discuss your answers.
- Making a list of the choices you have made in two different areas of your life and rank them in order of importance to you.
- Analyzing the life of Joshua. Make a video report highlighting his character qualities and the fortitude that compelled him to make wise choices in difficult circumstances.
- Singing the song "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus." Write your reactions to the lyrics.
- Setting a goal to form a new healthful habit. Follow your progress in a journal for three weeks.
- Interviewing five people with the question: Do you feel the need to make better health choices? If so, why? Write a report on their answers.
- Reflecting on the role your feelings play when making a decision. Ask God to help you make good choices based on His Word.

CONNECT

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 49.

lesson three

APRIL 10-17

Celebrating Spiritual and Physical Fitness

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

*They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow
weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa. 40:31, NIV).*



1 John 5:2, 3

Introduction

*Keeping Fit and
Healthy—God's Way*

Over the last decade, the world has seen many new diseases and health threats. Researchers have been put to the test to come up with solutions to these challenges, and while it might seem like they are making headway, we

Some of the fattest Americans are also dedicated Christians.

have to ask ourselves if we really have been experiencing an improvement in our lifestyle. Has all that increase in knowledge truly made us healthier?

After realizing that some of the fattest Americans are also dedicated Christians, Dr. Don Colbert wrote two books: *What Would Jesus Eat?* and *The What Would Jesus Eat Cookbook*. Dr. Colbert believes patients may be willing to listen to what Jesus may have done even if they ignore their doctors' advice about healthful eating.¹ He recommends a diet similar to the Mediterranean diet that is rich in whole grains, vegetables, and olive oil, but that leaves out foods such as pork and shellfish, both which contain fatty acid.

According to Dr. Colbert, if individuals eat according to the Bible and pursue a balanced life, they can prevent and maybe even reverse some diseases. However, this is not new. Already, established institutions, such as the Penang Adventist Hospital and many other Adventist health institutions, have relied on biblical principles to reverse diabetes.²

In the November 2005 issue of *National Geographic*, Dan Buettner wrote an article on longevity, backed with statistics from research funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health. This research shows that the average Adventist in the state of California lives four to ten years longer than Californians who are not Adventists. These extra years are attributed to a low-fat vegetarian diet rich in nuts and beans and the absence of such habits as smoking and drinking alcohol.

First John 5:2, 3 says, "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (NIV).

With medical doctors such as Dr. Colbert turning to the Bible for health solutions, let us take a deeper look this week at some biblical principles to learn about how God wants us to take care of our bodies.

1. "Bible Inspires Florida Doctor's 'Jesus Diet,'" <http://www.clickorlando.com/health/3952449/detail.html> (accessed March 6, 2009).

2. "Diabetic Reversal Program," http://www.pah.com.my/services/diabetic_education_centre/diabetic_reversal_program.asp (accessed March 6, 2009).

Celebrating Spiritual and Physical Fitness

Ps. 139:13–16;
Luke 15:4–24;
John 15:10, 11;
1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 9:24–27
Eph. 2:8–10
2 Tim. 2:3–5; 4:7
Heb. 11:6

Designed From the Inside Out (Ps. 139:13–16)

The psalmist points out that we are designed and created. We aren't a by-product of nature taking its course; we were not put together by accident. In Psalm 139, he praises God, thanking Him for purposefully creating him. The psalmist reveals a unique awareness of God's grace and purpose for him in the description of how he feels about having been "fearfully and wonderfully made."

All talk and no action do not lead to fitness.

Physical-Spiritual Vessels (1 Cor. 3:16; 9:24–27)

Being a Christian means that your life is no longer yours to live. Rather, it is Christ's (Gal. 2:20). Your body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, a "temple" of God.

Both collectively and individually, Christians are "temples" of God. The church, as a congregation of believers, forms the "body" of Christ (Rom. 12:5), and individual Christians who accept Jesus as their Savior are spiritual temples of God because the Holy Spirit lives in them. These temples then become a part of God's property. They are holy because God is there. Paul warns those who would dare trample on "holy property," saying they will be dealt with accordingly.

God cannot allow any part of His holy work to be damaged without bringing about retribution. This warning goes out to those who would dare think about dealing harshly with God's people and to God's people themselves. As vessels for the Holy Spirit, we need to keep ourselves spiritually and physically fit in order to maintain the presence of God within us.

Both spiritual and physical fitness is all about Christian self-discipline. Paul employs the example of the Corinthian games, which were similar to the Olympics, to illustrate how important self-discipline is. As Christians, we must do our part to keep physically and spiritually fit. This way, we reach the ultimate "prize" as Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 9:24–27. Athletes train themselves with rigorous routines and special diets that help them to perform their best. Here, Paul uses athletes as an illustration to emphasize the need for self-discipline in the Christian faith. All talk and no action do not lead to fitness.

It's Still All Grace, Not Works (Eph. 2:8–10)

Though we employ Christian self-discipline to keep us on track, the prize really is a gift from God. But self-discipline alone gets us nowhere either. A

genuine love for our Creator who purposely formed us helps us to ignore things that distract us from the prize—eternity with God.

“The grace that saves is the free, undeserved goodness and favour of God; and he saves, not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus. Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul. A regenerated sinner becomes a living soul; he lives a life of holiness, being born of God: he lives, being delivered from the guilt of sin, by pardoning and justifying grace. . . . Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not of works, lest any man should boast. These things are not brought to pass by any thing done by us, therefore all boasting is shut out. All is the free gift of God, and the effect of being quickened by his power. It was his purpose, to which he prepared us, by blessing us with the knowledge of his will, and his Holy Spirit producing such a change in us, that we should glorify God by our good conversation, and perseverance in holiness. None can from Scripture abuse this doctrine, or accuse it of any tendency to evil. All who do so, are without excuse.”¹

Completing the Race in Faith (2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 11:6)

Without faith in God, we cannot complete the race. Paul stresses that because he has kept the faith and he has run the race, that the prize awaits him and all who have also run the race. Physically and spiritually speaking, Paul acknowledges that he was created for the sole purpose of running the race in which his faith and physical being had been tested. By faith, he ran the race and denied himself. By faith, he completed the race and claimed the prize.

Review Hebrews 11:6. “To come to God has two presuppositions here: (1) The person must believe that there is a God and then (2) believe that God rewards those who sincerely seek him. Believing that God exists is only the beginning; even the demons believe in God’s existence (James 2:19-20). God will not settle for mere acknowledgment of his existence. He wants a personal, dynamic relationship with you that will transform your life.”²

REACT

1. How have you personally experienced the life of faith as it compares to running a race or some other physical endeavor?

2. When we do not exercise physically, our muscles become weak. Likewise, when we do not exercise our faith in God, it becomes weak. How does one exercise faith? How often are you exercising your faith?

3. Physical exercise and a good diet are important. However, in themselves, they do not give us eternal life. Only faith in Jesus can give us that. Why is it important to understand this distinction?

4. Why is it not enough to believe in our church’s 28 fundamental beliefs?

1. *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, comment on Ephesians 2:1–10, WORDsearch 7.

2. *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, comment on Hebrews 11:6, WORDsearch 7.

Strong Minds Need Strong Bodies

1 Cor. 3:16, 17

“Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature’s remedial agencies and how to apply them.”¹

“We have unseen enemies to meet.”

“We can not be too often reminded that health does not depend on chance. It is a result of obedience to law. This is recognized by the contestants in athletic games and trials of strength. These men make the most careful preparation. They submit to thorough training and strict discipline. Every physical habit is carefully regulated. They know that neglect, excess, or carelessness, which weakens or cripples any organ or function of the body, would insure defeat.

“How much more important is such carefulness to insure success in the conflict of life. It is not mimic battles in which we are engaged. We are waging a warfare upon which hang eternal results. We have unseen enemies to meet. Evil angels are striving for the dominion of every human being. Whatever injures the health, not only lessens physical vigor, but tends to weaken the mental and moral powers. Indulgence in any unhealthful practise makes it more difficult for one to discriminate between right and wrong, and hence more difficult to resist evil. It increases the danger of failure and defeat.”²

“The whole body is designed for action; and unless the physical powers are kept in health by active exercise, the mental powers cannot long be used to their highest capacity.”³

“Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right.”⁴

“You realize, don’t you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you? No one will get by with vandalizing God’s temple, you can be sure of that. God’s temple is sacred—and you, remember, *are* the temple” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17, *The Message*).

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 127.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

3. *Education*, p. 207.

4. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 346.

Lev. 11:45

Evidence

Science Proves God's Health Laws

Leviticus is a book many people view as irrelevant to modern society. However, as we explore the biblical reasons for spiritual and physical fitness, we soon discover that Leviticus is not as out-of-date as we might think. In fact, it might be more relevant than we could ever imagine.

**When it comes to healthful living,
the Bible truly was centuries ahead of its time.**

Leviticus is one of the five books of Moses. It is written primarily as a book of the law, with little history in it. It was part of the Mosaic covenant that God had with Israel, a covenant stating that God would care for the Israelites as long as they followed His laws. Many parts of Leviticus deal with the behavior of the priests during Moses' time. However, there are many parts which are still practical to us today.

In Leviticus 11, God talks about clean and unclean foods. In the early Christian church, much of this was deemed as irrelevant and unimportant. However, more and more, science is making discoveries that prove that God's laws are really beneficial. Leviticus 11:7, 8, says that the pig is not to be eaten. Today, the World Health Organization has strict guidelines on the export of pork, as it has a very high risk of diseases. Other meats forbidden by Leviticus, such as shellfish and other seafood, have also been found to carry a variety of diseases.

When it comes to healthful living, the Bible truly was centuries ahead of its time. Long before scientists understood the health benefits of a biblical diet, God already had instructed His people to eat and live right. In Leviticus 11:45, God calls us to be holy, because He is holy. This includes what we eat, what we drink, and what we do. God gives us such laws so that we will be happy. He gives us instructions on how to live right, so that our bodies will be healthy. We are better able to enjoy life when we live by His rules.

REACT

1. What are some foods, based on biblical principals in Leviticus 11, that we should refrain from consuming?
2. How can we change our diet to better obey God's principles of eating?

How-to *Be a Strong Branch!*

John 15:5

Many scientists believe that there is a correlation between our spiritual health and our physical health. Studies have shown that cancer patients are able to fight the disease better when they have a spiritual belief.*

Miracles of complete healing of terminal patients baffled doctors when earlier they had told families members to prepare for the worst.

Jesus wants us to be a blessing to the people around us.

Often our stress and depression in life stem from the fact that we have drifted further and further away from God. Conversely, when we do not take care of our bodies, we find that we become poor ambassadors for Him. Not only do we not have the energy needed to work efficiently, but we become ineffective examples of the abundant life He offers (John 10:10).

Jesus said that He is the Vine and we are the branches. So we need to stay connected to Him as our source of strength. We need to be physically ready to do His bidding, to go where He leads, to show clearly that being a Christian is a more healthful way of life. So how can we be strong branches?

Commune with Jesus daily. He invites us to seek His wisdom, meditate on His Word, and rely on His strength. In return, He promises to give us everything we need (1 Chron. 28:9; Matt. 6:33).

Run with perseverance. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb. 12:1, NIV). To do that, we need to be physically, spiritually, and mentally fit. We are to exercise our faith muscles in order to withstand the trials that will come our way. While our training may be painful and less than pleasant, it will produce “a harvest of righteousness and peace” (Heb. 12:11, NIV).

Be a light. Jesus is the Light of the world, and He wants us to bring His light to everyone around us. As we stay connected to the Vine, we are also called to bear fruit. Jesus wants us to be a blessing to the people around us. He wants us to bring light and encouragement to people who have lost hope and peace to those who are afraid. Our vertical connection with God enables Him to connect us horizontally to our communities. The joy of partnership with Him brings forth a healthy glow both spiritually and physically (John 8:12; 15:2).

*“Researchers Look at Prayer and Healing,” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/23/AR2006032302177.html> (accessed March 6, 2009).

Opinion

1 Tim. 4:8

Getting Our Priorities Right

I have a friend who is a fruitarian. According to him, eating anything other than fruit is highly detrimental to your health. If he sees us eating anything else, he will scold us and give us a lecture on healthful eating and preserving our bodies for God's work. My friend is also a Seventh-day Adventist.

How do we define ourselves?

Another friend of mine is so conscientious about getting enough exercise that she walks her dog for an hour every day. She is slim and fit. She is also a strict vegetarian who does not eat or use spices in her cooking because Ellen White cautioned against it.* She also is quick to correct and inform others in her presence who do not eschew what she considers to be unspiritual health habits.

A quick glance at their diet and fitness habits reveal that these two friends believe that following certain strict health practices are part of their obedience to Christ. However, is that all there is to our relationship with Him? How do we define ourselves? As zealots who go around scolding other people and making them feel judged and ostracized because they choose to eat a turkey sandwich?

Godly believers are known by their fruit—the fruit of the Spirit. This phrase is a biblical term that sums up nine visible attributes of a thriving Christian life. Using the King James Version of Galatians 5:22, 23, these attributes are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. We learn from Scripture that these are not individual fruit from which we can pick and choose. Rather, they form one fruit with nine facets that characterize all who truly walk in the Holy Spirit. Collectively, these are the characteristics that all Christians should be producing in their lives with the help of the Holy Spirit.

First Timothy 4:8 informs us, “Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (NIV). Notice that this verse does not say that exercise has no value! It says that exercise is valuable, but it sets priorities right by saying that godliness is of greater value.

REACT

1. Are you shunning healthful habits because they are espoused by people who turn you off by being overzealous?
2. How can you promote a healthful lifestyle without coming across as overbearing and self-righteous?

* *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 305, 325; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 67.

Exploration *Living as Temples*

1 Cor. 6:19, 20

CONCLUDE

God is our Creator and has made our bodies to be temples for His Holy Spirit. By grace, as an unearned gift, we are given the Holy Spirit, who leads us to greater and greater physical and spiritual health. We've also been given the Bible, which the Spirit uses to guide us in caring for our physical and spiritual well-being. By following biblical guidelines, we can live longer, healthier, happier lives. By not taking care of our bodies, we can weaken ourselves physically and spiritually. A life of health involves both our physical and spiritual well-being.

CONSIDER

- Drawing or painting your idea of what "good health" is.
- Writing your personal viewpoint about the effects of good health habits on your spirituality.
- Writing a poem or song about your life and body being a temple for God.
- Discussing with a group the effects of health on spirituality. Share examples of how you've seen this in your own life.
- Walking for 30 minutes at least once every day this week. Do you feel more relaxed? Sleep better? Look forward to these 30 minutes now?
- Asking God to lead you to better physical and spiritual health, and by His Holy Spirit, to show you areas that could use improvement.

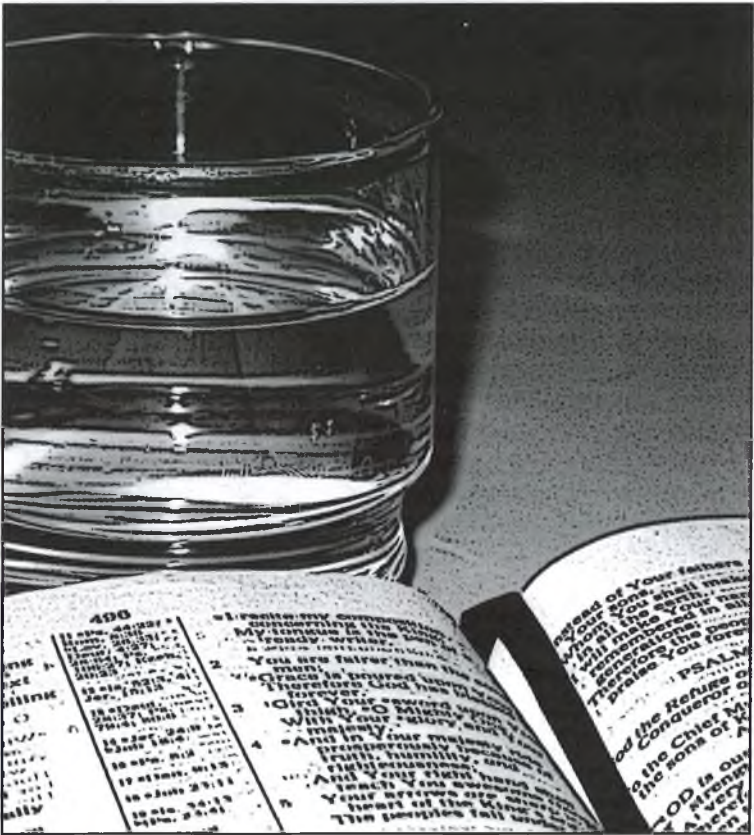
CONNECT

Counsels on Diet and Foods, chapter 2.

Nellie Jones, "Religion and Health," *Vibrant Life*, <http://www.vibrantlife.com/vl/article-81.html> (accessed April 2, 2009); Dr. Robert E. Baines Jr. and Daphene Baines, "Do You Really Understand That Your Body Is The Temple Of God?" <http://www.christian-living-site.com/Temple-of-God.html> (accessed April 2, 2009).

The Water of Life

“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:13, 14, NRSV).



Nor Any Drop to Drink! Nor Any Drop Consumed?

Rev. 21:6

“Water, water every where, / Nor any drop to drink.” These lines from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* resound with desire and convey the deep need of water for sustenance.

Water seems like such a simple thing. Cool, clear water has no calories and often no taste. We usually take it for granted and generally don’t consume enough of it. The moment we can’t access it, however, our minds can think of nothing else but having a tall glass of it.

Water seems like such a simple thing.

Our bodies are composed of 70 percent water. Our bodies can survive between 50 and 80 days without food, but only 3 days, on the average, without water. Dehydration comes quickly, and we begin to experience all kinds of physical symptoms when we don’t consume water.

Throughout the Bible, numerous stories and references speak about water. Sometimes it is used as a cleansing agent (Noah and the Flood). Another time God made sure that a prophet on the run had water to drink (Elijah and the brook Cherith). God used the water of the Nile to send a message to stubborn Pharaoh. Jesus turned ordinary water into the most flavorful wine served at a wedding feast. The Samaritan woman was confronted about her need for living water beside a well that was the source of daily water for an entire village. It was there that Jesus promised to supply water that would keep His followers from ever thirsting again.

The Creator could have chosen a different physical makeup for this world. Instead, He chose to cover 72 percent of the world in water. Christ told the woman at the well that even with all this water, we would still be thirsty if we didn’t access the Living Water daily.

How often do you drink water without thinking about the Living Water and what it means to you? During this week, we will examine stories of water in the Bible and their implications for our lives today. Remember the feel of the water in the baptistry as you were washed clean of your sins. Reflect on how parched and dry your life would be without the Living Water that is provided to you because you became a follower of Christ.

Don’t go through life with water, water every where, nor any drop consumed. Drink freely today of the Living Water.

1 Kings 1:45;
2 Kings 20:20;
2 Chron. 32:30;
John 9:1–12

Evidence

Gushing or Seeping?

Jerusalem was built on a hill of hard limestone. Underneath the limestone hill are karstic caves that were carved out by the underground water that flowed from the Gihon Spring. This spring was the city's only water source. It is mentioned several times in the Bible including during the anointing of Solomon as King of Israel (1 Kings 1:45). In Hebrew, the word *Gihon* means "to gush forth." The Gihon Spring didn't have a steady flow of water. Its water flow was affected by the season and the amount of annual rainfall.

Residents of the city used a natural subterranean water system.

The spring was fed by ground water, which accumulated in the subterranean caves. When the area was filled, the water would spill over and siphon its way to the surface to create a pool.

The water would flow from the cave out into the Kidron Valley, where crops were watered from the spring. The Bible speaks of this area as the "King's Garden" (2 Kings 25:4; Neh. 3:15).

Because the Gihon Spring lay outside of the city of Jerusalem, if an attack on the city occurred, the water supply for the city was threatened. Residents of the city used a natural subterranean water system, which is today known as "Warren's Shaft," because it was discovered by C. Warren in 1867 during archeological explorations. This shaft allowed a person to travel underground to the Gihon Spring and draw water from it by utilizing a container fastened to a rope without ever having to leave the protective walls of the city.

Water from Gihon Spring also flowed through Hezekiah's Tunnel to the Siloam Pool. It was to this pool that Jesus sent the blind man to be healed (John 9:1–12). Hezekiah's Tunnel was constructed during the reign of King Hezekiah and is mentioned in 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:30. The Assyrian army presented the threat of invasion and so the tunnel, as well as fortifications, were constructed. With these modifications, the Pool of Siloam was subsequently located within the walls of Jerusalem.*

* Hillel Geva, "Jerusalem—Water Systems of Biblical Times," Jewish Virtual Library, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/jerwater> (accessed February 6, 2009).

Water Please, No Ice

Gen. 2:10;
Isa. 40:31;
Matt. 9:2–7;
John 4:1–26; 9:1–11;
Rom. 6:1–6

“Water, Water, Every Where” (John 4:14)

Water is so ubiquitous that it seems almost meaningless to talk about it. Surely, everyone knows what water is and what it does. The only people who need to study it are the molecular biologists who want to understand the construction, application, and function of the tiniest parts of water. On the other end of the spectrum, it would be great to comprehend the depths of the deepest trenches of the ocean and how light-emitting fish can live there. But when the smart people who study those things figure them out, they’ll let us know with a news feature on the *Daily Show*, right?

Got water?

Assuming that God made water along with everything else He made, why is it the most abundant and recognizable commodity on the earth (at least from space)? And why do we spend so much time and money looking for it in places such as Mars? Those aforementioned smart people tell us it is the most fundamentally essential substance needed for life to exist. After all, God could have made things any way He wanted, according to any set of natural laws He wanted to put in place. There is no such thing in God’s universe as coincidence.

So what did Jesus mean when He said to the woman at the well, “‘Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life’ ” (John 4:14, NRSV)? The woman had obviously been living for some time without ever having drunk of the water Jesus offered. She had been married five times without the water Jesus offers. Perhaps this, in itself, is a clue to our quest for a reason to care about water.

Water’s Dual Meaning (Gen. 2:10–14)

Water is physical, and it is spiritual (symbolic). We use it to keep ourselves clean. Doing so not only helps us to look better and to be more socially acceptable, but it actually helps to prevent illness. We can literally wash away what ails us or what could potentially ail us. On the inside, by keeping our bodies hydrated, our organs can gather, filter, and eliminate hazardous foreign microscopic bodies and worn-out cells.

Spiritual water cleanses us from the eternal deadly effects of sin. A soul connected to the Source of this water is kept clean by the constant renewing of the Holy Spirit's cleansing.

When Genesis 2:10–14 speaks of the river of water that runs from Eden, it tells us of the four rivers that originate from this source in the land of sinlessness. In the same way the four winds represent strife in all corners of the world, these four rivers could represent health and spiritual cleansing going to all corners of the world. Even today, Hindus believe rivers are sacred and their water is an important part of purification rituals.

Water's True Source (John 4:14; 1 Cor. 10:4)

Jesus is the source of this living water (John 4:14; 1 Cor. 10:4). "Prayer will bring before the Lord of hosts the wounds of Jesus, and then will flow forth afresh the life-giving blood, symbolized by the flowing of the living water."* Everywhere we see water—in the seas and rivers, in the vapor of the atmosphere, even within the membrane of every cell of our bodies—we are to remember that the saving, healing grace of Jesus is right there, ready to give us healing from sin and the illnesses it creates in us. We cannot be separated from this water and live. We cannot be separated from the grace of Jesus and live spiritually.

Water baptism was designed to teach these very lessons. The watery grave of Romans 6:1–6 bears in it the promise of healing for eternal life. This is the all-enveloping nature of water. Convenience aside, a person being baptized is intended to get wet. Thus, the intermingling of the physical and spiritual aspects of water are taught by God in making water one of the indispensable elements of good health—water on the inside, and water on the outside.

The power of Jesus' promise in John 14 is seen as He spoke of the relationship between Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Their fluid boundaries make it nearly impossible to know where one ends and the others begin. In verse 17, Jesus promised the Spirit who " 'lives with you and will be in you' " (NIV). Jesus doesn't want to be just with us, but in every cell of our physical and spiritual being. He longs to be the ubiquitous commodity that is seen above all, whether others look at us in passing or study us in detail to determine the source and function of our life ambition. We are to be so close to Him that there is no difference between us. Then He says, " 'Because I live, you also will live' " (John 14:19, NIV).

Got water?

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

Quench My Thirst, O God

John 4:1-26

One of the provisions God made for humans when He created the earth was to provide water in abundance. He designed us to need it both on the inside and outside of our bodies. Without it, we cannot live more than a few days. As Christians, we need the daily living water that Bible study and prayer bring to our lives.

"He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life."

"In health and in sickness pure water is one of Heaven's choicest blessings. Its proper use promotes health. It is the beverage which God provided to quench the thirst of animals and man. . . .

"The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul."¹

"He who seeks to quench his thirst at the fountains of this world will drink only to thirst again. Everywhere men are unsatisfied. They long for something to supply the need of the soul. Only One can meet that want. The need of the world, 'The Desire of all nations,' is Christ. . . .

"Jesus did not convey the idea that merely one draft of the water of life would suffice the receiver. He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world do not attract him. The constant cry of his heart is, More of Thee. And He who reveals to the soul its necessity is waiting to satisfy its hunger and thirst."²

"He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life."³

1. *My Life Today*, p. 139.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

Matt. 6:34;
John 4:1–26;
Eph. 6:11;
1 Pet. 5:8

How-to Treating Spiritual Dehydration

If you stop drinking water for just one day, it can cause headaches and dizzy spells. If you go without water for a longer time, the circulation of blood to your vital organs becomes less efficient, and your mental abilities become impaired. What would happen if a Christian stopped drinking the water of life that Jesus offers?

If you stay in this situation, you will surely die spiritually!

The media reports survival stories of individuals lost in the wilderness areas who have run out of water and drink polluted water in order to survive. The polluted water often causes illness. If the people are not rescued, they die.

If we apply this scenario to a person lost in the world without spiritual water, the result would be much the same. You realize you are lost. You become scared and desperate, willing to drink anything just to survive. Focusing on the immediate need rather than on biblical principles, you drink “polluted water” from worldly fountains. If you stay in this situation, you will surely die spiritually!

So how do we prevent this situation?

Be prepared for each day. Jesus says, “Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt. 6:34, NIV). If we don’t drink enough spiritual water, we will become like a lost hiker without enough water. Therefore, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, NIV). As you set out each day, be prepared. Don’t leave your house without drinking spiritual water. When you do leave, bring some with you, because you could lose your way. Remember, even seasoned hikers can lose their way.

Be forewarned. Paul advises us to “put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11, NIV). Drink daily and drink often of the water of life that only Jesus can provide. This is how you can have inside you a “well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

Remember the symptoms of spiritual dehydration. Wandering without purpose; anxious without hope; tempted (seemingly) without escape; entangled in worldly affairs; resistant to spiritual counsel.

REACT

1. When have you been spiritually dehydrated? How did you cope?
2. How can we bring relief to those who don’t even know they are spiritually dehydrated?

Food and Water, or a Sermonette?

John 4:14; 12:8

Jesus recognizes the physical needs we have. His earthly ministry was full of miracles that met such needs. He healed many debilitating diseases and provided food and drink for crowds of people. The other part of His mission, however, was even more important. He offered Living Water as well. He recognizes that spiritual knowledge and salvation are even more critical than the physical needs of His people. However, He doesn't ignore either facet of our lives.

Preaching a lengthy sermon to a starving person probably won't do much good.

When we love God and have a relationship with Him, we want and need to share with other people. Because we know our value lies in God's eyes, we should know that all other men and women are valuable too. All people, no matter how they are dressed or where they are located, are of the utmost value to our Creator.

We have the knowledge that can save lives just as certainly as any mythical superman who can hoist a fallen building, or a skilled mediator patiently rescuing hostages from a hostile situation. The fate of the human race is certain death. The saving answer to that problem is to accept Jesus as Lord of our lives and hearts. When we do, we become qualified to lead others to Christ.

Is it enough to serve soup at homeless shelters or send a donation that will purchase food for hungry people? By all means, Christ wants us to care about the predicaments of our fellow human beings. We weren't called to live in a bubble. Christ balanced His ministry by meeting the physical and spiritual needs of those He encountered. Preaching a lengthy sermon to a starving person probably won't do much good. As Christ did, we must reach out and help others. We must love them as He loves them. Show first; *then* tell what His love is and where to get more of it.

REACT

1. What are you doing to meet the physical needs of others? What spiritual needs are you helping others to meet?

2. Pray for a calling. Then be open to whomever God calls you to help physically or spiritually.

3. Have you received both the physical water and spiritual water in your life?

4. What is the water springing up to eternal life that Jesus spoke of in John 4:14?

Carrie Purkeypile, Sacramento, California, U.S.A.

Acts 17:24

Exploration

Come to the Waters

CONCLUDE

Water is the most abundant element on earth and arguably the most important. Wars have been fought over access to it. While physical water is essential to physical health and well being, the spiritual water offered humanity through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ is not only integral to one's physical life, but it is also the essential building block of eternal life. When we drink deeply of the Living Water—Jesus Christ—we are satisfied for now and eternity. We become fountains from which others can drink freely.

CONSIDER

- Locating a babbling brook or waterfall. Watch and listen to the gentle flow. Ask a friend to videotape you doing a dramatic reading of Revelation 22, with special attention paid to verse 17.
- Ranking the following spiritual disciplines based on how much each quenches your spiritual thirst on a scale from 1 (most thirst-quenching) to 5 (least thirst-quenching): (1) spiritual music; (2) Christian friends; (3) Bible study; (4) witnessing; (5) devotional reading; (6) service done on behalf of others.
- Thinking of a moment in your life when something from God's Word was a source of comfort to you. Write a one-paragraph testimony of this experience, and either share it with five Facebook friends or e-mail it to five friends.
- Writing a two-stanza song about Jesus, the Water of Life, using all of the following words in each stanza: water, life, Jesus, cleansing, healing, thirst. The words need not be in the sequence listed.
- Reading and meditating on John 4:13, 14. What did Jesus say would happen to those who drink the water He offers? Is your life a spring welling up with eternal life? Is your life having a godly impact on the people around you?
- Considering the following: If we cannot exist without water for more than three days, how long might our spiritual life last if we stop drinking the Water of Life—Jesus Christ?
- Starting a daily devotional walk with God by setting aside time each day to drink from His Word, the Bible. Plant something to signal the beginning of your journey, and remember to water it each day.

CONNECT

The Desire of Ages, chapter 19.

Max Lucado, *Come Thirsty: No Heart Too Dry for His Touch*, chapters 1–3.

The Environment

*“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and
all who live in it” (Ps. 24:1, NIV).*



Ps. 24:1

Introduction

Are We Responsible?

It arrived at the shores of Alaska. The camper's green plastic soda bottle that perhaps was thrown off La Jolla beach in California, grouped with a larger pile of rubbish off Saint Lawrence Island in the northern Bering Sea. Alaska and other northern regions are vulnerable to pollution from faraway places.* Today, more and more people dump their trash anywhere without thinking of the harm it does to the environment. When I told her of the soda bottle on the Alaska beach, one of my fellow dorm residents said, "I feel bad for the polar bears." So should we all. Animals suffer from our careless habits.

The polar bears deserve to have a home to live in too.

Careless use of the earth's resources will surely backfire. Scientists are predicting food and water shortages in the near future. They say we should take shorter showers, buy less food, and conserve natural resources by recycling much more and driving less. In a talk at Andrews University, conservationist Dr. Matthew Sleeth observed that the average person could cut fuel costs in half by leaving the car in the garage twice as much. Such conservation would not only reduce pollution but help equalize the use of natural resources among industrialized and developing countries.

The earth holds many splendors: the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, and even the seemingly endless Sahara Desert. Wouldn't it be tragic if all of these splendors would be ruined with debris, marring the pure brilliance of God's creation? God created the earth for us to love and to take care of. As His children, we are responsible for taking care of His precious gift that He left for us to love and admire. I take responsibility, not only by being a good citizen, but in caring for the earth by minimizing my use of disposable food containers, recycling, and keeping the area that I live in clean.

Psalms 24:1 states that the earth is the Lord's. So why wouldn't we want to take care of it? We should make a commitment to manage His world and its treasures because He assigned us to be its caretakers. The polar bears deserve to have a home to live in too. The earth is our gift from God, so it is our responsibility to protect His gift until He returns. This responsibility is the topic for this week's study.

*Alaska Conservation Foundation, "Toxic Pollution in Alaska," http://www.akcf.org/_attachments/pdf/events_amp_publications/acf_dispatch/acf_dispatch_sum00.pdf (accessed February 13, 2009).

God's Creation: Past, Present, Future

Genesis 1–2:7;
2:18–24; 3:7, 17, 19;
Ps. 24:1;
Matt. 25:34–46;
Mark 2:27, 28; 3:4

Idyllic Creation (Gen. 1:1–2:7; Mark 2:27, 28; 3:4)

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:2, 3, NIV). Thus began God’s miracle of Creation. Those first six days of earth’s history provided a visual representation of His glory and love. The psalmist says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1, NIV). God repeatedly stepped back to look at the work He had done and proclaimed that “it was good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Creation culminated with the Sabbath, the day to commune with God in the natural world He had created for humans. Sabbath, like the earth, was created for our benefit—a way for us to better understand our Creator. God intended the Sabbath rest for all of His creation, not just humans (Exod. 23:10–12).

The symbiotic relationship God intended was damaged.

Relationship Between People and the Earth (Gen. 1:26, 28; 2:18–24; Matt. 25:34–46)

Genesis describes Adam and Eve’s relationship with the rest of the creation in chapter 2: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (verse 15, NIV). The relationship is expressed by the Hebrew word *mishmar*, meaning “allegiance,” “duty,” or “charge” (Num. 18:3–5, 8, 9). *Mishmar* has the same root as the word used in Numbers 18, where God describes the care the Levites are to have for God’s sanctuary. Here God reminds them that this responsibility is a precious gift, just like the earlier gift to Adam of caring for the earth. The same responsibility and privilege of careful superintendence over the earth still exists for us today. The earth is the Lord’s (Ps. 24:1), but God has given us the awesome responsibility of caring for it (Ps. 8:6–8).

Our relationship with the earth is further explained in verses that discuss stewardship. Jesus addressed this idea through several parables. In Matthew 25:14–30, He tells the story of the man going on a journey who entrusts his servants with his property. The man who invested wisely and protected his master’s interests was rewarded with even more responsibility. We all have different abilities and resources, and God has indicated that we should do what we can to be good stewards of these things, especially His original gift to us—the earth.

In the passage in Matthew, Jesus goes on to tell the story of the sheep and the goats who will be separated based on how they have taken care of those in need (Matt. 25:34–46). Again, Jesus emphasizes the idea of good stewardship of the resources we have been given.

God's Earth Marred by Sin (Genesis 3)

With the entrance of sin, God's ideal has been marred. Selfishness brings the tendency for us to use the earth without regard for the preservation of our resources. When Adam and Eve realized they were naked, they tore fig leaves from a tree to fashion crude clothing (Gen. 3:7). Later, God implemented the first animal sacrifice and used the skins to create more permanent clothes for them (Gen. 3:21). Thus death was an immediate result of sin.

Further effects of sin appear in the curse God delivered after Eve's fateful decision. God said the ground would produce thistles and that humans would be able to eat only through "painful toil" with the earth (Gen. 3:17–19). The symbiotic relationship God intended was damaged.

God's people continued to misuse the earth. Much later in earth's history, the Israelites abused the land God gave them. His commands to allow a Sabbath rest for the land every seven years were ignored. When the Israelites were carried into captivity, the land would finally have its Sabbath rest (2 Chron. 36:20, 21).

Not only does our exploitation of the earth harm it; it also harms us and all the living inhabitants of the planet. We now have to worry about sun exposure, toxic smog, polluted water, chemicals in our food, and many other human-created environmental problems that threaten our health.

The Restoration

As long as we live on earth, we have a responsibility as Christians to preserve God's creation to the full extent of our ability.

Though Jesus will re-create the earth when He comes (Rev. 21:1), we cannot use that as an excuse to ignore our duty to take care of the earth now. In fact, God has made it clear that a time is coming when He will reward those who have done good work, which could certainly include taking care of the earth (Ps. 62:12). He also explicitly states that those who destroy the earth will be punished (Rev. 11:18).

In God's new earth, we will be able to see again God's ideal Creation, never again to be marred by sin. We will be able to say with the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3, NIV).

REACT

1. What changes can each of us make in our daily lives to protect and care for the earth?

2. In what ways can we still see God's love and power reflected in a creation that is marred by sin?

Love the Earth, Love God

Genesis 1–2:7; 2:18–24

“As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes; but the hills and mountains were not abrupt and rugged, abounding in terrific steepes and frightful chasms, as they now do; the sharp, ragged edges of earth’s rocky framework were buried beneath the fruitful soil, which everywhere produced a luxuriant growth of verdure. There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The heights were crowned with trees more majestic than any that now exist. The air, untainted by foul miasma, was clear and healthful. The entire landscape outvied in beauty the decorated grounds of the proudest palace.”¹

“Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love.”

“Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator’s love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures.”²

“In His teaching from nature, Christ was speaking of the things which His own hands had made, and which had qualities and powers that He Himself had imparted. In their original perfection all created things were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve in their Eden home nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. Wisdom spoke to the eye and was received into the heart; for they communed with God in His created works. As soon as the holy pair transgressed the law of the Most High, the brightness from the face of God departed from the face of nature. The earth is now marred and defiled by sin. Yet even in its blighted state much that is beautiful remains. God’s object lessons are not obliterated; rightly understood, nature speaks of her Creator.”³

REACT

Why is it worthwhile to keep the earth clean now if it will be destroyed with sin anyway?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 9.

3. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 18.

Gen. 1:28

Evidence

*Stewardship of the Earth:
What Does God Expect?*

What did God mean when He told Adam, "Fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28, NIV)? It's obvious that He wants us to respect all of His creation, even though we are superior to it. But should we give nature precedence over our needs as humans?

**God instructed His faithful servant Noah to cut down
a virgin forest to build an ark.**

When God created Adam, He made him ruler over the entire planet, and He expected Adam to govern it wisely, nurturing what He made to serve humans. However, after the Fall the situation changed. Humans and nature then began to compete with each other. Nature experienced its first losses when Adam and Eve "killed" fig leaves to make clothes and when an animal was killed to make clothing for the fallen couple. People now needed to use and manipulate nature to survive in this new, sin-infested world. God never speaks out in opposition to this practice. In fact, in Genesis 6:14, God instructed His faithful servant to build an ark so that people could survive the worldwide flood that was coming. Even as the water receded, Noah was told that he and his family could eat the clean animals, so that the people wouldn't die. It is evident from these verses that humans are intended to use nature for their basic needs and survival.

God also instituted the ancient Hebrew sacrificial system, where a sacrificed lamb was used to represent Jesus Christ. As a burnt offering (Leviticus 6), the animal was set on an altar and burned before the Lord. The people had a command from God to take the life of the animal so that they could better understand the future sacrifice of Christ. The people were, in fact, required by God to do this. We need to always rule over nature wisely, as God commanded us. God never gave us permission to abuse what He and His creative power have made. In fact, God makes it clear that one day He will destroy those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18). He does, however, grant us permission to use the resources He has given us and makes it clear that we are to use them wisely.

REACT

1. To what extent can we use the resources we have been given? Should we, for example, allow off-shore drilling?
2. What principles should we use to find a middle ground between using what God gave us and needlessly wasting it?

Michael Riess: Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.

How-to Appreciating Nature

Gen. 1:26

During the six days of Creation, God made a special gift for Adam and Eve and their descendants. How should we treat His gift? Here are two ideas:

Don't leave it at the edge of the table where it may be knocked off and broken. We need to consider that the environment is as precious as our own lives. Both are gifts from God. Genesis 1:28 makes it clear that with this gift comes the responsibility to care for it. So why do we so readily abuse God's present to advance our own desires? We have battered and abused our environment for the past few hundred years. We have destroyed whole forests. We are experiencing severe climate changes due to the depletion of the ozone layer. And most water supplies are polluted. Yet we persist in our ways. Luckily, there is hope. If many people would make small adjustments—such as slightly lowering room temperatures during winter, recycling, turning off lights when leaving a room, and using kitchenware rather than disposable containers—we can make a difference.

Go outside and explore!

Do not set it on a high shelf to gather dust. Have you ever received a gift you thought you would never use, so you laid it to rest on a high shelf where it's still waiting for a garage sale? We should not treat nature like this. It begs for us to appreciate it and treat it well. God gave us an amazing world. So go outside and explore! There is no need to spend money traveling halfway around the world. Instead, check out nature trails or parks in your town. Even if you are a busy student on your way to the cafeteria, try taking the scenic route. One of the best times to appreciate nature is on a Sabbath afternoon. Persuade some friends to go for a walk to that lookout by the river or whatever lovely spot is near you. Watch the stars after the sun sets. Go to a beach and feel the sand beneath your feet. See if you can make at least one rendezvous with nature every week.

REACT

1. What is the connection between nature and our state of mind?
2. How does the way we treat the environment affect our relationship with God?
3. What other ways can you think of to care for God's gift of nature?

Opinion

Gen. 2:18–24; 3:17

*The Environment's
Punishment*

When Adam was made, God had him name all the creatures. Why did He do this? Why didn't He just make the names Himself and tell Adam what they were? I believe that it was so Adam would have a personal respect for the environment. He felt no fear toward the animals or threat from the birds because they were his companions. This was before sin, when the world was perfect. There was no fear of global warming or natural disasters. There was always food and good weather. Then it all changed.

**Why were the earth and its creatures being punished
for our actions?**

When sin filled the world, it was not just humans who were affected, but also the land God gave us. In Genesis 3:17, God told Adam that the ground was cursed because he ate the forbidden fruit, and that now through painful toil he would grow his food for the rest of his life. Why were the earth and its creatures being punished for human's actions? The earth was made for us to enjoy, but the pleasures of it were diminished as a result of sin. Instead of having fruit from trees already grown, Adam and Eve were forced to plant orchards. The conditions worsened, and this made it harder to farm. Also, the animals that were supposed to be for our enjoyment and companionship were being used in agricultural labor and killed for food. This was not a part of God's original plan for the earth.

Sin affected not only the earth's natural resources but our attitudes toward them. We are selfish enough to want to drive big air-polluting, gas-guzzling cars; we use plastic bags for our groceries because we are too lazy to carry around reusable totes. There are so many ways we can prevent harm to the environment—but we do not act on them.

By treating the environment with respect, we are doing what God wanted us to do from the beginning. The land is His; let's not litter it with candy wrappers and aluminum cans. The sky is His; let's not fill it with chemical emissions. Look at all of the beauty that is left in the world and see for yourself whether it is worth preserving.

REACT

1. How can you eat in such a way as to respect God's creation?
2. How can you become more involved in saving the environment? What practices in your daily life are environmentally unfriendly?
3. Investigate what health issues are caused by our polluting the environment.

Erin Johnson, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.

Ruling With a Heart of Green

Prov. 12:10

CONCLUDE

After creating a world that would be any gardener's dream, God put humanity in charge. He gave us a gift to be treasured, a responsibility to be valued, a domain to be governed not with a fist of iron but with a heart of green. Because of sin and selfishness, we fail in environmental stewardship as in other responsibilities. The cost of failure can be severe for the environment, for our health and well-being, and for our eternal destiny. We must strive to minimize negative environmental impacts. Today is a good time—and where we live a good place—to start.

CONSIDER

- Researching one or two terms found in environmental news, for example, biodiversity, climate change, sequestration, or invasive alien species.
- Preparing a scrapbook of the efforts Adventists or others in your community, country, or region have made to protect or improve the environment.
- Reflecting on evidence in the Old Testament of God's concern for the environment. Are there any New Testament examples? (See John 6:12.)
- Writing a paragraph or two on what images the term *environment* arouses in your mind. A clean room? Unpolluted beaches? Recycling?
- Creating a chart—or writing an essay or even a poem—illustrating how preparing, advertising, and eating hamburgers in Europe or North America can affect the health of rainforests in Africa or South America.
- Finding—or if necessary, creating—a Web site highlighting the responsibility of Christians to protect and improve the environment.
- Growing plants organically in a garden or in some pots.

CONNECT

Frank A. Campbell, "Whispers and Waste," http://www.unep.org/OurPlanet/imgversn/103/07_whisp.htm (accessed April 2, 2009); Henry A. Zuill, "Expanding the Garden: A Christian's View of Nature," http://www.aiias.edu/ict/vol_14/014cc_409-427.htm (accessed April 2, 2009).

Faith and Healing

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on

You, because he trusts in You' " (Isa. 26:3, NKJV).



Introduction

Great Faith and True Healing

Matt. 15:21–28;
John 15:7;
1 John 3:22

Matthew 15:21–28 is a wonderful story about how faith can assist with the healing process:

“Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.’ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’ But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour” (NKJV).

“She came with a kind of superstition as she might have come to any magician.”

“This woman had *faith*. (a) It was a *faith which grew* in contact with Jesus. She began by calling him *Son of David*; that was a popular title, a political title. It was a title which looked on Jesus as a great and powerful wonder worker, but which looked on him in terms of *earthly* power and glory. She came asking a boon [favor] of one whom she took to be a great and powerful *man*. She came with a kind of superstition as she might have come to any magician. She ended by calling Jesus *Lord*.”*

True faith rests on the promises contained in the word of God, and only those who obey His Word can claim its glorious promises. Read John 15:7 and 1 John 3:22.

Just as the woman received true healing not only for herself but for her daughter, so we can be healed if we are totally committed to God. This commitment is a deliberate intention not only of the heart but also of the mind. This week, the subject of our lessons will be the powerful influence our minds have on our bodies.

REACT

The quote from Barclay says that the woman’s faith grew as she had contact with Jesus. How could this be, since this was the first time she had met Jesus?

* William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, n.d.), p. 123.

Num. 21:4–9;
Prov. 17:22;
1 Cor. 13:13

Evidence

The Bronze Snake

When I was a little child, I wondered why it was important to pray before taking medicine. As an adult, I now realize that praying before taking medicine helps me to focus on the true Healer, Jesus Christ.

“‘I’m going to trust Him through all this.’”

This world is impure because of sin. Sin has created many diseases. Sin has therefore destroyed and degraded our body’s endurance.¹ However, faith in Jesus, our love for Him, and the hope He inspires in us can be powerful medicines when it comes to being healed of these diseases.

The event that we read about in Numbers 21:4–9 is evidence that faith in Jesus can cause healing. The Lord said to Moses, “‘Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live’” (Num. 21:8, NIV). In this instance, the snake on the pole symbolized Jesus Christ. As the people looked to the snake on the pole, those who had faith in their Savior were healed.

David B. Larson was the president of the International Center for the Integration of Health & Spirituality in Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A. Dr. Larson was a pioneer in scientifically researching the relationship between faith and health. He wrote, “The type of coping that seems to help [when a person is sick] is when a person sees himself in a collaborative venture with God: ‘I’m working on this together with God and I’m learning things through this experience.’ Another type of coping that is helpful is the attitude, ‘God’s will be done. I’m going to trust Him through all this.’”²

Mohammad Siahpush is a professor of health promotion at the University of Nebraska (U.S.A.) Medical Center. He states that “everything else being equal, if you are happy and satisfied with your life now, you are more likely to be healthy in the future. Importantly, our results are independent of several factors that impact on health, such as smoking, physical activity, alcohol consumption and age.”³

REACT

Review the statement above made by Dr. Larson. If you do not currently feel that you are working together with God, what can you do to strengthen your relationship with Him?

1. *Healthy, Happy, Holy*, 2nd ed. (Bandung, Java, Indonesia: Indonesia Publishing House), p. 25.

2. Stephen Goode, “Larson Explores Role of Faith in Health,” http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1571/is_48_15/ai_58361271/?tag=content;coll (accessed February 23, 2009).

3. “Happiness and Satisfaction Might Lead to Better Health,” <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/08/080830161436.htm> (accessed February 24, 2009).

Nothing to Fear

Gen. 3:8–10;
Ps. 118:6;
Prov. 17:22;
Matt. 6:27–34;
Heb. 13:6;
1 John 4:18

The Root of All Illness (Gen. 3:8–10)

The fall of Adam and Eve resulted in separation from God, the source of all life. Apart from Him, humankind was left in a state of self-destruction. Perfect bodies that once were clothed with light are now susceptible to sickness and disease. Temperate characters are now inclined to bad habits. The two humans closest to physical perfection on this earth hid themselves in shame from the Creator of the universe.

Some hospitals hire comedians to come and make people laugh.

And yet, the very One they hid from was the only One who could heal the damage wrought by a few moments of sinful indulgence. While God has not promised to remove every illness or wound we may encounter on this earth, He has promised to completely eradicate it one day. God is more concerned with the eternal than with the temporary. Christ's work here on earth testifies to His desire to heal both physically and spiritually. He died to connect us back to the source of all life—God Himself.

Genesis 3 and Christ's ministry reveal the close connection between the body and the mind. No sooner had Adam and Eve sinned than their bodies began to suffer the consequences. Death is now an expected part of our existence. Yet the pain we experience when a loved one dies indicates how unnatural death really is. It was never part of God's original plan. Our spiritual life, the connection that we have with God, is closely tied with our physical well-being. The two cannot really be separated.

Putting Our Trust in God (Ps. 118:6; Matt. 6:27–34; Heb. 13:6)

Psalm 118:6 reassures us that God is on our side. We don't need to worry. Because we have that assurance of God's alliance with us when we put our faith in Him, we need not fear. He is listening when we call out to Him. He is there when we face the most challenging circumstances on this earth.

Stress and worry have long been connected with high blood pressure, heart problems, sleep deprivation, depression, anxiety attacks, and a host of other physical ailments. There are many things in this life to worry about: job stability, health, having enough food and clothing, getting our own education and educating our children, relationships with others—the list is seemingly endless.

Yet in Matthew 6:27–30, Christ counsels us to not worry about tomorrow or even about our basic needs. Why? Because God is in control. Putting our trust in the One who knows tomorrow can give us rest and peace today. That peace of mind boosts both our spiritual and our physical health. We can boldly trust in the Lord's provision and in His wisdom and timing (Heb. 13:6).

Merry Hearts (Prov. 17:22)

Laughter is said to have healing qualities. Thus some hospitals hire comedians to come and make people laugh. We cannot really experience joy without the presence of those we love and who love us. When we have joy through fellowship, we can experience a healing that comes from sharing our faith and being bonded with others. That healing may manifest itself in forms such as lower blood pressure and higher immunity. Even tumors have been known to shrink where joy is present. More important, joy through fellowship heals our emotional and spiritual wounds that cause us so much agony.¹

Conversely, without fellowship and the joy that comes with it, our hearts wither, and we are more likely to heal slower, if at all, both physically and spiritually.

Nothing to Fear (1 John 4:18)

Sin results in fear. That is why Adam and Eve hid from God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8–10). As humans we often allow fear to drive our behavior and even give us our values. We fear death, so we try to stay healthy and look as young as we can. We fear failure, so we do everything in our power to be successful. We fear poverty, so we run after monetary security. We fear the dark, so we keep the night light on. We fear losing loved ones, so we stay up late and worry about them. We fear other people, so we arm ourselves with mace and weapons. We fear what people think, so we try to control the image we present to them. All of these fears take us away from the Creator. All of these fears point to death and deception. The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:18 that “perfect love casts out fear” (NKJV). We no longer have to be afraid.

Science testifies to the connection between faith and physical healing.² But more than that, we can experience healing in our spiritual lives that will overflow into every other aspect of our lives. That kind of love can come only from our Creator. It takes faith to believe, but the power is undeniable in a heart that is receptive to God's perfect love. Ultimate healing is ours for the taking if we will allow Him to work in our broken lives. We can stop hiding our sin-ridden selves and start living in the power of His love.

REACT

1. What fears do you need to give to God today?
2. How have you experienced faith and healing?

1. James G. Friesen et al., *The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You* (Pasadena, Calif.: Shepherd's House, 2004), p. 23.

2. Jeffery Kluger, “The Biology of Belief,” *Time*, February 23, 2009, pp. 62–72.

Testimony Forever Faith

Prov. 17:22

“Faith, saving faith, is to be taught. The definition of this faith in Jesus Christ may be described in few words: It is the act of the soul by which the whole man is given over to the guardianship and control of Jesus Christ. He abides in Christ and Christ abides in the soul by faith as supreme. The believer commits his soul and body to God and with assurance may say, Christ is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. All who will do this will be saved unto life eternal. There will be an assurance that the soul is washed in the blood of Christ and clothed with His righteousness and precious in the sight of Jesus. Our thoughts and our hopes are on the second advent of our Lord. That is the day when the Judge of all the earth will reward the trust of His people.”¹

**“Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health
and prolong life.”**

“Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul. ‘A merry [rejoicing] heart doeth good like a medicine’ (Proverbs 17:22).

“A person whose mind is quiet and satisfied in God is in the pathway to health.

“Health, life, and happiness are the result of obedience to physical laws governing our bodies. If our will and way are in accordance with God’s will and way; if we do the pleasure of our Creator, He will keep the human organism in good condition and restore the moral, mental, and physical powers in order that He may work through us to His glory. Constantly His restoring power is manifested in our bodies. If we cooperate with Him in this work, health and happiness, peace and usefulness, are the sure results.”²

“Our desires and interests should be lost in His will. These experiences that test faith are for our benefit. By them it is made manifest whether our faith is true and sincere, resting on the word of God alone, or whether depending on circumstances, it is uncertain and changeable. Faith is strengthened by exercise. We must let patience have its perfect work, remembering that there are precious promises in the Scriptures for those who wait upon the Lord.”³

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 531.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 647, 648.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 231.

Gen. 12:6, 7; 13:3, 4;
2 Kings 5:1–27;
Matt. 9:20–22

How-to The Garden of Faith

If we want to have true healing, we must grow a faith garden. This is important, because faith in God can enhance healing. To grow our faith garden, we need to plant four rows of *Lilies*, and finally in the center, plant one row of *Edelweiss*:

Faith and action go hand in hand.

Row 1—Lead us to have a relationship with God. Abraham was the father of the Israelites. Everywhere he went, he built an altar and offered sacrifices to show his faith in God. His supreme test involved the sacrifice of his son Isaac. Abraham passed this test. Abraham's altars symbolize the special faith relationship he had with God. If we worship God as devotedly as Abraham did, our faith will also grow.

Row 2—Lead us to have a burning desire for Jesus. In Matthew 9:20–22, Jesus healed a woman who had been sick for 12 years. He told her that her faith in Him had made her whole. To get to Jesus, she forced herself through a huge crowd, despite knowing that her illness made her unclean and therefore banned from being in public. That is faith!

Row 3—Lead us to be strong like Jesus. Every time we fall, we must get up and keep going. Our problems make us weak only when we don't depend on Jesus to help us.

Row 4—Lead us to obey all of God's commandments. The experience of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1–27 teaches us that for our faith to be genuine, it must be accompanied by action. If Naaman had not washed in the Jordan seven times, he would not have been cured. Faith and action go hand in hand.

Row 5 (the middle row)—Educate your mind to believe with all your heart that Christ is the answer. "Many are suffering from maladies of the soul far more than from diseases of the body, and they will find no relief until they shall come to Christ, the wellspring of life. Complaints of weariness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction will then cease. Satisfying joys will give vigor to the mind, and health and vital energy to the body."*

REACT

1. How are the sacrifices we make today and our general, overall behavior better indications of our faith than just our words?
2. What is the significance of having the middle row be that of educating our mind? What is the role of education in faith building? Is faith only education, or is it more?

**Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 403.

The Combo Healing

Ps. 27:11-13;
116:1-10

A large part of my growing-up years was in India. And many of those years were spent fighting off something that couldn't be explained medically. At her wit's end, the doctor diagnosed me as a drug addict even though I had never touched the stuff. Then she told others that it was the only logical (not medical) reason. (So much for patient confidentiality and the Hippocratic Oath.) The local ministerial director wanted to bring a faith healer from his home state. And when the local busybody met me on the road, she urged me to confess my sins, because they were what was making me sick.

All of this was just way too much for me to endure.

In the middle of all this "reasoning," I began to believe the many rumors spread by the doctor, the ministerial director, and the busybodies. What if God is punishing me? *What if I have done something wrong? What if my faith isn't good enough?*

I remember asking God to let me go, because the medicine they were giving me was sending me into convulsions, and the doctor was prescribing Valium to put me under so I could take that medicine. All of this was just way too much for me to endure.

One night when the convulsions began and my mom ran to get my dad, I prayed that God would hold me till they could get me to the hospital to sedate me. I grabbed my Bible and began reading. Miraculously the convulsions diminished. My parents came back and were amazed that I was just twitching. But the moment we stepped into the hospital, the convulsions resumed, and I went down like a bowl of jelly. And yes, the doctor sedated me.

Years later, an intern discovered that the doctor was prescribing medication that my body was allergic to. It wasn't my sins. It wasn't a drug habit. It wasn't a lack of faith. It was just a wrong medicine.

When I told a pastor friend of mine this story, he said the prayer and Bible reading was just a coincidence.

Really?

How often we brush miracles away as coincidences. Yet miracles do happen. Yes, we have to do our part. And, yes, we have to pray through it all. But somehow there is a combination that builds power. When God's grace, our faith, and the love and care of the people around us combine, we tap into the power beyond our understanding. Then healing begins in earnest.

CONCLUDE

Jesus' ministry is full of stories of people who experienced healing through faith in Him. Even the Old Testament story of the bronze snake on a pole symbolized healing by faith in Jesus. Our bodies—and our environment—have been corrupted by sin. Only the One who created us in the first place can help us find healing. When we rest in His power and promises, we can avoid many of the health problems associated with stress and worry. God wants us to live joyful lives, free from fear. He wants to be the center of our existence.

CONSIDER

- Making a collage of Scriptures about health and healing.
- Writing a psalm from the viewpoint of one who has asked for—and not received—physical healing from a specific malady.
- Singing the hymn “The Great Physician Now Is Near.”
- Journaling your prayers for healing in your own life or someone else’s.
- Creating a short skit or role-play that illustrates several people coming to Jesus for healing. Make sure that at least one of your characters does not experience the healing he or she desires, and show how this situation could still demonstrate God’s grace.
- Listing contrasts between a holistic Christian view of health/wellness and traditional modern medicine.
- Interviewing a health professional about some of the concepts in this week’s lesson.

CONNECT

The Ministry of Healing.

Jan W. Kuzma, Kay Kuzma, and DeWitt S. Williams, compilers, *60 Ways to Energize Your Life*; Hans Diehl and Aileen Ludington, *Dynamic Living or Health Power*; S. I. McMillen and David E. Stern, *None of These Diseases: The Bible’s Health Secrets for the 21st Century*; George H. Malkmus, *Why Christians Get Sick*.

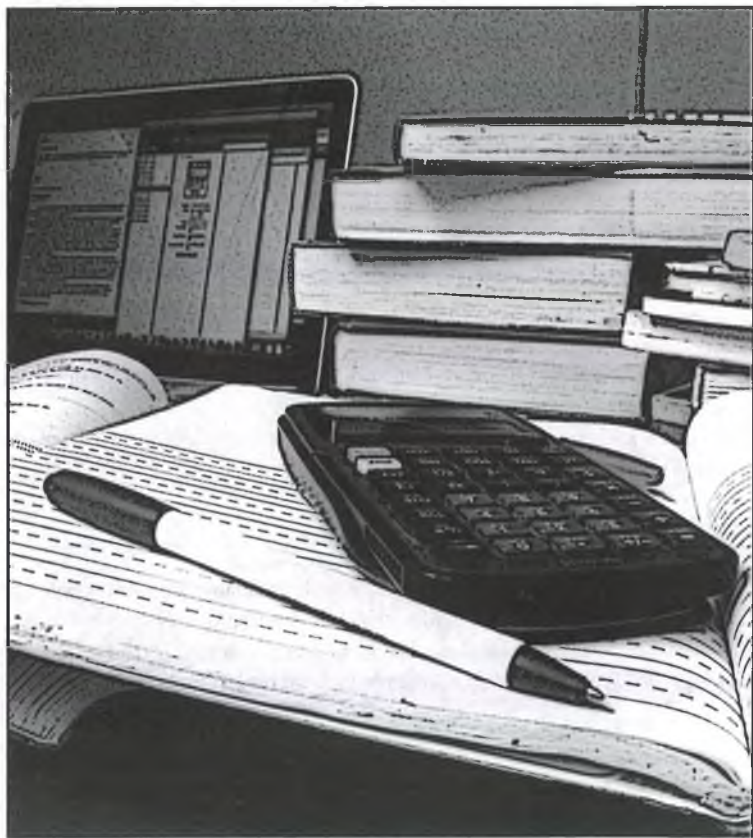
lesson seven

MAY 8-15

Rest and **Restoration**

"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest' "

(Mark 6:31, NIV).



Matt. 11:28–30

Introduction

The Need for Total Restoration

I have observed my family during a typical workweek and noticed how demanding school and work can be. The intensity of our day-to-day activities requires us to get some well-deserved rest. However, we never seem to have time for it.

What a great way to forget all our cares!

Think about your own schedule. How busy are you with classes, homework, your job, your family? Then there's the time needed to eat or to clean your dorm room or house. If you are in charge of a growing family, the demands on your time are even more intense. What's a person to do?

It is said that rest is required in order for someone to function at his or her physical, mental, and spiritual best. Getting this rest was part of God's plan when He set aside both the darkness of each day and the seventh day as the Sabbath. He knew we would need daily rest, and that at the end of the week we would need time to forget all the troubles of the other six days. What a great way to forget all our cares—praising the Creator during one 24-hour period for sparing our lives each week! Read Matthew 11:28–30 again. “In these words Christ is speaking to every human being. Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. ‘The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.’ Isa. 53:6. He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart.”*

The need for rest will always be at the forefront of our minds because our bodies and our minds were not created for work only. The body needs rest as it is constantly attacked by physical and spiritual diseases. We also need to remember, however, that only the Divine Healer, Jesus Christ, will give us total restoration.

* *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328, 329.

Restored in Jesus' Rest

Gen. 2:15;
Exod. 20:8–11; 23:12;
Matt. 11:28–30;
Mark 2:27; 6:30–32

Work and Rest Before the Infection of Sin (Genesis 1; 2)

Considering the Greek proverb “The beginning is the half of all things,” I decided to review the entire Creation story. I was excited to realize that Adam and Eve’s initial experience with God was largely that of rest! “Notice the symbolism of what happened at Creation. God worked six days and then rested the seventh, after His work was complete. But for Adam and Eve, the process was reversed. They first rested on the Sabbath and *then* followed it with six days of work. They had nothing to do with God’s creative acts. They came on the scene at the end of Creation week. They simply received their lives from Him and all the blessings of Eden as a . . . gift.”¹

The Sabbath instructs us to rest in what God has done for us.

Before sin infected the earth, God assigned to Adam and Eve the work of dressing and keeping the Garden of Eden. To Adam, God also gave the task of naming the animals (Gen. 2:20). This confirms that we were not made for contemplation only. We also were created to interact with creation through the exercise of our bodies and minds.

The Rejuvenating Sabbath Rest (Exod. 20:8–11; 23:12; Mark 2:27)

God never intended the Sabbath to be a physical or ceremonial burden. In the context of rabbinic ceremonialism, Jesus declared that the “‘sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath’” (Mark 2:27, NRSV). The Sabbath is too wonderful a gift to be diminished by ceremony and overexertion. After Adam and Eve sinned, they began to deteriorate, along with the rest of creation. They began to experience weariness, pain, and hunger. Daily replenishment through sleep became an important cycle, and part of what the Sabbath fostered was an opportunity for that essential physical rest. Read Exodus 20:8–11; 23:12. When the body is refreshed, the mind is better prepared to function in the ways God had originally intended for it to work.

“[T]he sabbath commandment is unique among the ten. It is the only one not an obvious moral duty. Why? Amid the law’s stringent demands God offers us rest in the fourth commandment. The other nine tell us *what we must do for God* and neighbor. But the Sabbath instructs us to *rest in what God has done for us*. Exodus 20 reminds us of God’s finished Creation on our behalf. Deuteronomy 5 invites us to rest on the Sabbath in memory of the redemption He accomplished for us.”²

Pause for Peace (Mark 6:30–32)

At different points between the evening of Friday, March 26, and the afternoon of Sabbath, March 27, 1999, I had the opportunity of listening to, meeting, traveling with, and having Sabbath lunch with the late Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, in what was his first visit to Jamaica.

I don't remember exactly how I got into the mix of waking up early Sabbath morning in the dorm, and then traveling with Pastor Wellington, Dr. Bacchiocchi (or Dr. Sam as he liked to be called), and my friend Sean Brooks as a company of four making the one-hour journey from the University's Parish of Mandeville to my native Kingston, where we church-toured. However, I do remember the Sabbath lunch we had at Brother Ashton Tai's home and a particular request of Dr. Sam after lunch. He asked Brother Tai if he could rest for one hour before returning to the afternoon session. This need reminded me of Mark 6 when Jesus bade His disciples to " 'come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest' " (Mark 6:31, NIV). As ambassadors for Christ, especially ministers and medical workers, we need to "rest awhile," to occasionally chill out by seeking solitude.

Resting in Jesus (Matt. 11:28–30)

Finally, if our mind is not in Christ, physical rest will not fully restore our bodies. Christ invited, " 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light' " (Matt. 11:28–30, NIV). I like the composition and harmony of the song by Take 6 "Come Unto Me," which is based on this invitation of Christ. The only way to find ultimate harmonious rest while working for the ultimate good is to accept Christ, then learn from and follow Him.

REACT

1. When was the last time you have awakened without the help of an alarm clock? Are you really getting enough sleep?
2. What steps can you take to minimize stress during the week?
3. What steps do you think people took to minimize stress on the Sabbath day in the Old Testament? What steps did Jesus and other people take to reduce stress on the Sabbath in the New Testament? What can we learn from this about the steps we can take to reduce stress on the Sabbath?
4. Search YouTube to find Take 6 or another group singing the song "Come Unto Me." Listen to it and imagine that you are alone with Jesus.

1. Robert S. Folkenberg, *We Still Believe* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1994), p. 63.

2. Martin Weber, *Some Call It Heresy* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1985), p. 94.

"I Will Give You Rest"

Matt. 11:28-30

As a nurse I've learned that there is really only one invitation I can give to very ill people. Those are Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-30. Read them now if you haven't already done so.

"These words of comfort were spoken to the multitude that followed Jesus. The Saviour had said that only through Himself could men receive a knowledge of God. He had spoken of His disciples as the ones to whom a knowledge of heavenly things had been given. But He left none to feel themselves shut out from His care and love. All who labor and are heavy-laden may come unto Him.

"[Jesus] invited all to find rest in Him."

"Scribes and rabbis, with their punctilious attention to religious forms, had a sense of want that rites of penance could never satisfy. Publicans and sinners might pretend to be content with the sensual and earthly, but in their hearts were distrust and fear. Jesus looked upon the distressed and heart burdened, those whose hopes were blighted, and who with earthly joys were seeking to quiet the longing of the soul, and He invited all to find rest in Him.

"Tenderly He bade the toiling people, 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'"¹

"The yoke is placed upon the oxen to aid them in drawing the load, to lighten the burden. So with the yoke of Christ. When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light. He who walks in the way of God's commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest. When Moses prayed, 'Show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee,' the Lord answered him, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. . . .'

"Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest."²

REACT

1. Is taking Christ's yoke upon you similar or equivalent to taking up your cross? Explain.
2. How can taking Jesus' yoke give you rest?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 328.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

Exod. 20:8–11;
Eccles. 5:12

Evidence *The Essentials of Restoration*

I asked some friends what came to mind when they heard the word *rest*. For some it meant afternoon naps, peace and quiet, snuggling up in a favorite chair, or being in a safe haven away from the stresses of their fast-paced world. Certainly rest plays a vital role in our well-being. Today we will focus on rest as an integral part of the church's health message from two perspectives: spiritual rest and physical rest.

Spiritual rest is just as important as physical rest.

Spiritual rest is just as important as physical rest. Scientific studies have shown that inadequate rest and, worse yet, sleep deprivation can have detrimental effects leading to premature aging, nervous disorders, and mood swings. During sleep, the body performs vital functions that are crucial to health and longevity. That certain functions leading to restoration occur during sleep is symbolic of our rest in Jesus, which leads to spiritual restoration. It is only as we rest in Him that we can experience spiritual restoration.

Physical restoration occurs as we adhere to the natural laws, one of those laws being rest. The parallel spiritual rest is mentioned in Matthew 11:28–30, where Jesus invites us who are weary to come to Him for rest. Ecclesiastes 5:12 states that “sweet is the sleep of laborers, whether they eat little or much; but the surfeit of the rich will not let them sleep” (NRSV). A hard-working Christian who trusts in God—or, as it were, rests in Jesus—will physically sleep well, taking no thought for tomorrow. There can be no doubt that a lack of proper rest at night will affect how we participate in the Sabbath rest. It is also important to realize that the spiritual rest Jesus calls us to enjoy will remove guilt feelings that often lead to unhappiness and a lack of peace.

Just as physical rest is necessary for life, so spiritual rest is essential for life, not only now but for eternity. As God rested on the seventh day after creating this world (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8–11), so the same seventh-day Sabbath is today a weekly reminder for us that Jesus is our Creator and Savior.

REACT

1. Ecclesiastes 8:16 speaks of “how one's eyes see sleep neither day nor night” (NRSV). Does this describe your life? If so, what changes do you need to make?

2. Search the Web to learn more about the benefits of sleep. Compare those benefits to spiritual rest.

Understanding the Importance of Rest

Mark 2:27;
Heb. 4:9–11

Rest is important to the Christian's life. Immediately after His work of Creation, God rested from all His work (Gen. 2:2, 3; Heb. 4:10). Because God knew the importance of rest in renewing the mind, body, and spirit, He instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest for humankind. For Jesus, rest was also important. Recognizing that His disciples were overworking, He instructed them to stop and rest (Mark 6:31).

Satan loves nothing more than the sleep-deprived Christian.

Rest in the Lord cannot be crammed into a few minutes of hurried devotion early in the morning. It requires that we take time to slow down and gain some perspective on life. The book of Hebrews assures us that at the end of our journey there "remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9, NIV).

In today's society, it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to rest. Our preoccupation with work, school, and other activities robs us of quality rest. At times, it would appear as if our own bodies force us to become sick so that we can finally rest. But there are easier steps we can take in the quest for rest:

Get quality sleep at night. Like any computer or machinery that requires maintenance over time, our bodies also require repair. Sleep recharges the brain and repairs the body from wear and tear. Schedule at least six to eight hours sleep. Lack of sleep for prolonged periods of time can affect our thinking and decision-making. Satan loves nothing more than the sleep-deprived Christian whose ability to think clearly and make wise choices is inhibited.

Eat well. Plan your meals to include foods from all the food groups. Eat a good breakfast and lunch; but eat a light supper. It's hard to sleep when your stomach is full.

Exercise regularly. Exercise can help the brain switch roles and prepare the body for rest. However, don't exercise just before going to bed, or your body will be too pumped to rest.

Spend quality time with God. Worship brings us closer to Him, helps us focus on what's really important, and creates a feeling of calm. Avoid taking the burden of sin to bed with you. Give that burden to your Savior. In fact, He already took that burden to the cross where He died for your sins.

Resolve conflicts. Read Ephesians 4:26. As much as possible, settle disagreements and disputes before bedtime, especially within your household. This allows for a more peaceful rest.

Matt. 11:28–30

Opinion

Not Another Scam

Have you ever received an e-mail or letter stating that you'd won a trip around the world or a cash prize redeemable after you made a "small" payment? These "generous" offers are usually scams that leave their victims worse off financially than they were before. As a result, I'm usually skeptical about these offers that seem too good to be true. However, Matthew 11:28–30 presents us with a proposal that I am unable to decline. It reads, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (*The Message*). Who can resist an offer like that?

It's an offer we never have to delete from our e-mail.

Jesus knows that every once in a while we need a break. His proposal of granting us rest is a guarantee that we can receive just that—once we go to Him. It's an offer we never have to delete from our e-mail. That sly con artist, the devil, seeks to deceive us into believing that we can and need to carry our burdens by ourselves. Our Creator, on the other hand, has sent a gift of rest just for you, which you need only to claim.

Growing up as an Adventist, I have always looked forward to the Sabbath. It is the one day of the week on which the Lord commands us not to do any work. He doesn't have to tell me twice! On the Sabbath, for 24 hours, I am set free from all my worries and cares. I don't have to fret about deadlines or worry about finding the time to get all my tasks done. With all the physical, mental, and emotional rest that I get on the Sabbath, I am cleansed, repaired, and rejuvenated, fresh and able to face all the tasks that will present themselves to me during the new week. Rest is an inexpensive remedy for an exhausted individual. Why don't you invest in some rest today?

REACT

1. Why do people who refuse to rest never really get ahead?
2. Why did our powerful and mighty heavenly Father rest after creating the earth?

God's STOP Sign

Mark 6:31

CONCLUDE

To a world on the go, God says, STOP! STOP working, and get a good night's sleep. STOP worrying, and give your concerns to Me. STOP rushing, and take time to be with Me. The Sabbath is God's special weekly STOP sign, calling us to lay aside our own work and to rest in the work God has done for us, both as our Creator and Redeemer. As we learn to rest, our faith in God's love and care increases, and we are renewed from the inside out. So pay attention to God's STOP signs in your life.

CONSIDER

- Painting or drawing a picture of a scene that embodies rest for you. Hang it up in your bedroom to remind you of what God wants for you.
- Starting a Quiet Service in the middle of the week. Set off a couple of hours when people can visit the church to meditate and pray. They should be able to come and go as they wish in quietness. Create an atmosphere of rest in the sanctuary with candles and soft music, but remember—no talking aloud.
- Babysitting for a couple with young children so they can spend the evening together. Give them a card with Jesus' words to His disciples: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."
- Compiling a Sabbath CD that helps you to unwind and enter into worship. Choose from your favorite "restful" songs.
- Making a prayer trail. Create a variety of stations at which participants can meditate over Bible verses and experience the restfulness of nature.
- Reviewing the steps for better rest listed in Wednesday's lesson. How are you doing in your "quest for rest"? Which areas do you need to focus on in order to be rested?

CONNECT

The Desire of Ages, chapters 29, 38.

Shawn Boonstra, *The Sign*; Nancy Van Pelt, *The Art of Making Sabbath Special* (DVD); Max Lucado, *Traveling Light*.

The Atmosphere of Praise

*“The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a
living being” (Gen. 2:7, NIV).*



Praise—the Pure Air of Heaven

Ps. 100:4

Psalm 100:4 commands us to “enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise,” and to “be thankful to Him and bless His name” (NKJV). Why is such behavior commanded? Were we perhaps created as human beings with an inner desire to praise our Maker?

In Genesis 1, we read how God made each part of creation to fulfill specific purposes. He worked to make sure everything was good. All nature was created with the intention of praising God. Read Psalm 148.

Praise . . . should come as naturally as breathing.

The colors and vibrancy of the environment fostered an atmosphere of celebration. When the beauty that blossomed in the seas and on the land was revealed to Adam and Eve, they could not help but break into praise for what they were experiencing; and their praise was like the pure, clean air of both heaven and earth.

There has, however, been quite a bit of corruption in both God’s beautiful creation and in humanity’s praise. Many animals no longer peacefully co-exist. Water sources have become polluted, making it difficult in many parts of the world to obtain pure drinking water. The air we breathe is also full of contaminants, which can cause lung cancer and asthma. Humans now have an unhealthy desire to worship gold, money, precious jewels, and sinful activities, all of which contaminate our desire to praise our Creator. Like air, the atmosphere for praise should be pure and inviting. Praise is an action that should come as naturally as breathing, for it is written in our God-created nature that we are beings who need to praise our Creator in order to have a healthy, spiritual life.

All is not lost, however. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, people can learn once again to praise God fully and to immerse themselves in the joy of fulfilling their God-given purpose. The satisfaction that accompanies such praise is what God intended.

But what defines praise? The Bible describes praising God with the lyre, the harp, the tambourine, and with a joyful noise. People have various preferences as to how they praise God. The various religions debate the nature of praise and whether restrictions should be applied to such activities. Perhaps there is only one thing certain about praise—it is as necessary to the Christian life as air is to our physical life. This week, we will learn about the health benefits of both praise and air.

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Dan. 5:23

Evidence *A Breath of Fresh Praise*

From Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar of Babylon had learned about the God in heaven. He had heard of Nebuchadnezzar's pride and of how God allowed him to experience mental illness as a way to repentance. But Belshazzar made his own choices against God, so God removed His protection from him. On October 12, 539 B.C., Belshazzar and his court had an intemperate party in which he used the vessels from the temple to serve wine. There was false praise to gods of silver, gold, brass, and wood. God was not pleased. This was the end of the road for Belshazzar. That night Babylon was overtaken.

This was the end of the road for Belshazzar.

The definition for praise is "to express a favorable judgment of," "to glorify . . . especially by the attribution of perfections."¹ In contrast, to flatter is "to praise excessively especially from motives of self-interest."² Flattery could also be "insincere or excessive praise."³ From these definitions and from Belshazzar's behavior, we see how our praise can be impure and therefore ruinous to our spiritual health.

Just as the right type of praise helps to grow healthy Christians, so does the right type of air help to grow healthy bodies and minds. The suspended water vapor found in air protects us from solar radiation and from the arctic vacuum of outer space, while fresh air transfers oxygen to the blood through the lungs and carries off the carbon dioxide that the body produces. Right now, you are carrying approximately two quarts (1.9 liters) of oxygen in your blood, lungs, and body tissues. Each cell in your body requires air in order to work properly. If brain cells are deprived of oxygen for more than four minutes, they begin to die.

Just as there are healthful ways and places to praise God, so there are healthful ways to obtain fresh air. It is important to praise God in the company of other Christians during social gatherings and worship service. Doing so helps us to grow spiritually. Likewise, it is important to seek fresh air whenever possible where there are trees, plants, and flowing water. The vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide in exchange for renewing the oxygen content of the air.

REACT

Think about how you can add more praise and fresh air into your life.

1. Merriam-Webster Online, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/praise> (accessed February 5, 2009).
2. Ibid., <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flatter> (accessed February 5, 2009).
3. Ibid., <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flattery> (accessed February 5, 2009).

Attaining the Ultimate Atmosphere

Gen. 1:1, 2, 9–12,
20–26;
Ps. 104:29;
Dan. 5:23;
Luke 15:7;
Rev. 21:4

When God created the earth, He created an environment in which we would be nurtured and would grow in our relationship with Him. He intended for us to develop and cherish an intimate relationship with our Maker. He wanted us to be so in tune with His will that praise would come as effortlessly as breathing. However, once sin came into the world, that perfect environment was gone. No longer would humans breathe the holy atmosphere. The connection intended for our happiness had been severed, and a lifelong struggle to reconnect with our Creator had begun. Through His life and death, our Savior endeavored to repair that connection and to restore that atmosphere. The final result will be the restoration of the perfect environment in the new earth, where once again praise and worship will flow as naturally as our breath.

His perfect plan was for them to live forever.

God-Given Life (Gen. 1:1, 2, 9–12, 20–26; Ps. 104:29; Dan. 5:23)

God breathed into Adam's and Eve's nostrils the breath (air, atmosphere) of life (Gen. 2:7). God gave them life and the ability to praise Him. The beginning of their lives was the beginning of God's effort to establish an intimate relationship with us. Through their perfect surroundings and the demonstration of His care for them, He endeavored to draw Adam and Eve to Himself and to inspire their heartfelt praise. They constantly had before them the evidence of God's creative power. After sin entered their paradise, they became more keenly aware of the truth that God held their very lives in His hands (Dan. 5:23) and that He could give life and take it away as He saw fit (Ps. 104:29). This truth, while not intended to create fear in them, was vital to their ability to distinguish between the one true Creator-God and the many false idols that would be presented as alternate gods. However, the attainment of this knowledge was never God's intent. His perfect plan was for them to live forever in an atmosphere of worship, praise, and life.

The Original Atmosphere (Gen. 1:1, 2, 9–12, 20–26)

Genesis begins the account of the human race and reinforces God's creative power. Here we have a glimpse into what happened when the world began. We see God gently and deliberately creating a perfect world. It was a flawless atmosphere in which to nurture His crowning creation—human beings created in His image. In everything surrounding them, Adam and Eve found evidence of God's creative power, love, and compassion. As the birds' "glad songs ascended to the praise of

their Creator, Adam and Eve united with them in thanksgiving to the Father and the Son.”¹ Every mountain and valley, every sunrise and sunset, every plant, and every gentle breeze pointed them to the Creator and inspired the most genuine praise from their hearts. God had created an environment that constantly reminded them of His greatness and that motivated their deepest, most heartfelt praise.

Living to Glorify God (Dan. 5:23; Luke 15:7)

Once sin entered God’s perfect creation, communication with Him took on a different perspective. Now we have to struggle to maintain a mere resemblance of a connection with our Creator. Daily, we must strive to create and support an atmosphere in which praise and worship come as naturally as our breath. For those striving to continually connect with Him, “to glorify God will be the continual aim of their life.”² They will be daily growing closer to Him and will “dwell in this world in the atmosphere of heaven, imparting to earth’s sorrowing and tempted ones thoughts of hope and longings for holiness; . . . coming closer and still closer into fellowship with the Unseen; like him of old who walked with God, drawing nearer and nearer the threshold of the eternal world, until the portals shall open, and [they] shall enter there.”³ Those who are endeavoring to create an earthly environment that supports praise and a worshipful spirit look forward to the day where the lost connection will be restored and the perfect atmosphere renewed.

A Renewed Atmosphere (Rev. 21:4)

In Revelation, the residents of the new earth are seen praising God continually. “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things” (Rev. 4:11, NIV). Daily, they will be in the presence of the Almighty, who created and redeemed them. Their natural inclination will be to praise the One who has done so much for them. “The redeemed raise a song of praise that echoes and re-echoes through the vaults of heaven: ‘Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb’ ” (Rev. 7:10).⁴ No more will they have to struggle to maintain a connection with their Creator. They will forever live in a perfectly restored atmosphere in which they will continually worship and praise Him “‘for ever and ever!’ ” (Rev. 5:13, NIV).

REACT

1. What daily practices do you have that may enhance or damage your atmosphere of praise?
2. What can you do daily to help maintain an atmosphere where praise can flow as naturally as breathing?
3. What might you be doing that could be polluting another’s atmosphere against praise?

1. *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 40.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

3. *Education*, p. 127.

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

Living in the Atmosphere of Heaven

Gen. 1:1, 2,
9–12, 20–26;
Rev. 21: 4

“The spirit of Christ’s self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the very essence of its bliss. This is the spirit that Christ’s followers will possess, the work that they will do.”¹

Love is the very atmosphere of heaven. Those who anticipate heaven and eternal life should strive to perfect their character to match that which will pervade heaven.

Love is the very atmosphere of heaven.

“If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth. The traits of character you cherish in life will not be changed by death or by the resurrection. . . . The work of transformation must be done now. Our daily lives are determining our destiny.”²

Living in the atmosphere of heaven is not something that we have to wait to receive. By living the life that God intended for us we can have a taste of heaven here on earth.

A person “may dwell in this world in the atmosphere of heaven, imparting to earth’s sorrowing and tempted ones thoughts of hope and longings for holiness; himself coming closer and still closer into fellowship with the Unseen; like him of old who walked with God, drawing nearer and nearer the threshold of the eternal world, until the portals shall open, and he shall enter there. He will find himself no stranger. The voices that will greet him are the voices of the holy ones, who, unseen, were on earth his companions—voices that here he learned to distinguish and to love.”³

“Those who take no pleasure in thinking and talking of God in this life, will not enjoy the life that is to come, where God is ever present, dwelling among His people. But those who love to think of God will be in their element, breathing in the atmosphere of heaven.”⁴

REACT

If you were transported into heaven right now, would you find the “voices of the holy ones” unfamiliar, or would you feel as if you were coming home?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 77.

2. *The Adventist Home*, p. 16.

3. *Education*, p. 127.

4. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 370.

Luke 15:4–10;
1 Pet. 1:18, 19

How-to

Live Heavenly on Earth

It is an obvious fact that we live in a fallen world. It is an amazing fact that by simply accepting Jesus' gift of salvation, we become citizens of His kingdom. Even while we are still here on earth, we can live in an atmosphere of heaven, praising God daily with our words and actions.

God's love for us is unimaginable.

How can we breathe the fresh air of heavenly love while on earth? And how can we incorporate nature's fresh air into our lives? Here are steps to guide you:

Recognize your worth as a child of God. Read 2 Corinthians 6:18. God's love for us is unimaginable. We can't even begin to understand it, but we can praise and thank Him for it. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, every person can become a member of the highest royal family. Every day recommit yourself to following Jesus and to living your life as the child of God that you truly are.

Choose to glorify your Father in His temple. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. We are not to treat our bodies with casual indifference. We must care about how we dress, eat, play, and speak. Exercising regularly helps us to breathe better and therefore to think better. When our minds are clear because we have exercised, we are better able to resist temptation. Consider your habits and daily activities. Find something in your life that you can change or improve and in so doing, bring praise to the Savior.

Lead others by example. As you grow in your relationship with God and live your life in honor of Him, you will find that His light will shine from you onto others. We are to find the lost and bring them to Jesus. When even just one person accepts Him, all of heaven rejoices! (Luke 15:4–10). Don't be picky about whom you share God's love with. Lead by example and witness to everyone. Jesus paid a terribly high price to redeem us from our unfulfilled, sin-riddled lives. Read 1 Peter 1:18, 19. We must not squander Christ's precious gift. Look for ways you can share it today.

REACT

1. What are some specific ways you can begin to implement the above steps in your own life?
2. Why do you think God rejoices over each sinner's salvation?
3. How important is it to live today like we are already in heaven? What are some other ways this can be done?

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Our Bodies as Temples

Gen. 1:26;

Dan. 5:23

Some Christians feel that God doesn't care how we treat our bodies. They believe there are no longer "clean" or "unclean" foods. They base this claim on Peter's vision of the sheet coming down from heaven (Acts 10:9–16). But the Bible makes it clear in the following verses that this is not the case. God really does care what we consume. However, it goes beyond clean and unclean meats, or even beyond vegetarian or vegan. Daniel 5:23 points out that the Babylonian king was dishonoring God by defiling the holy objects that had been looted from the Temple and using them to praise his false gods of wood, stone, and metal. While Christians no longer have an actual temple in which to worship God, we have other ways of living that glorify Him.

God really does care what we consume.

First Corinthians 10:31 tells us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that they are not our own. Genesis 1:26 tells us that we are made in the image of the Creator God. Because it is God's plan for us to honor Him through our physical bodies, it goes against His will when we fill our bodies with things that pollute them or when we treat our bodies in any other unhealthful way. Using drugs and alcohol are obvious, but not exercising or drinking too little water can also weaken our bodies, thereby dishonoring God. If an idol is anything we place above God, and if we knowingly live contrary to the standards He has set, then even a dangerous habit that affects our health becomes an idol to us.

First Corinthians 6:20 says, "You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (NIV). If Christ can sacrifice everything for all of humanity, it's not too much for Him to ask that we live our lives in the healthiest way possible. We can praise Him physically by not indulging in things that do serious and often irreparable damage to our bodies. Even though people are not worshiping idols in the form of wood or metal like those of the Babylonian king, we can worship idols by directly choosing to do things that God has shown us are contrary to His wishes. Choose today to worship God by living a healthy life in praise to Him.

REACT

What do you need to change about your life in order to praise God with your body temple?

Gen. 2:7

Exploration

Breathing Lessons

CONCLUDE

Breathing. It seems so natural. Why would we have to think about how we breathe? The fact is, how we breathe matters. Singers and those who play horns or reed instruments, athletes, and those beginning an exercise regimen learn this. But practicing proper breathing techniques also helps us to manage stress, increases the oxygen flow to our blood cells, optimizes our muscle function, and helps our brain think more clearly. We can breathe just enough to survive. But proper breathing maximizes our health and increases longevity. God breathed the first breath into humans, and Jesus revives us spiritually with His breath. John records that before Jesus ascended into heaven, He breathed on His disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). We need to practice spiritual deep-breathing lessons, receiving all of the life breathed into us by Christ when He gave us the Holy Spirit.

CONSIDER

- Taking a nature walk. Breathe in deeply of the fresh air. Make your walk a personal get-away with your Creator. Tell Him how wonderful and beautiful His creation is. Thank Him for your life and health. Praise Him, and allow Him to use this time to bless you.
- Helping someone experience the “atmosphere of heaven” by taking an elderly person out of an assisted living residence for an afternoon. You could treat him or her to a picnic in a nearby park, to a museum, or to a bright and airy restaurant. Or you could just take them for a scenic drive.
- Taking time from your daily routine to breathe deeply. Get up from your desk, stretch, and take a walk to clear your mind. As you breathe deeply, praise God. Paul urges us, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:16–18, NIV). We can do this by making prayer and praise as regular as our breathing.
- Keeping a daily praise journal to express your gratitude to God and the relationship that is being developed between you and Him. Use the journal as a way to see where He is leading you.
- Leading out in a public praise meeting or asking the pastor if you can read the Scripture during divine service; or lead in a song, sing a solo, or publicly testify as to how God is working in your life.

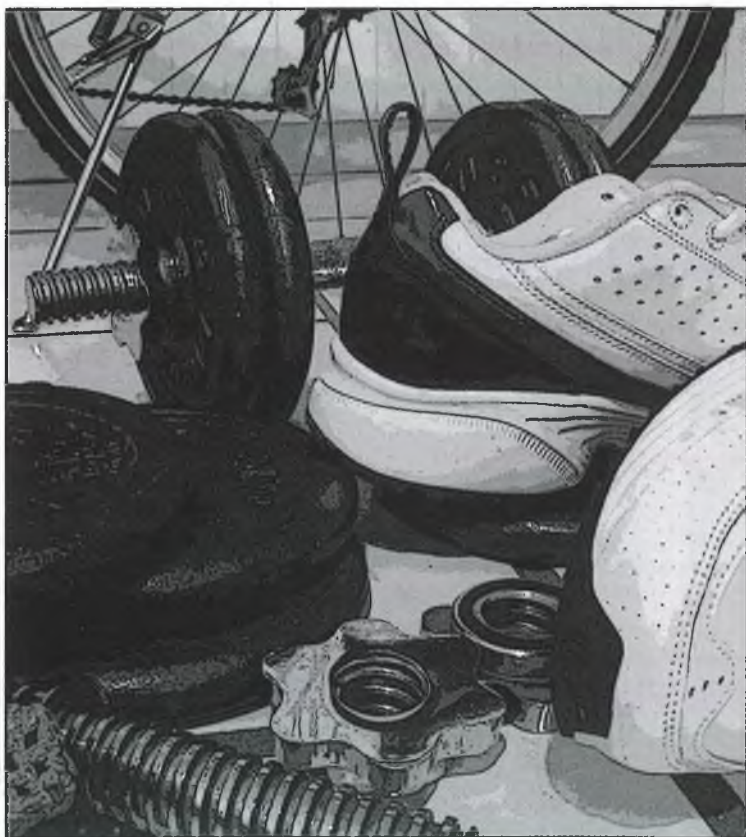
CONNECT

The Ministry of Healing, chapter 3.

Joan Kollner, Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.

Temperance

*"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at
hand" (Phil. 4:5).*



1 Cor. 9:25–27

Introduction

Too Much of a Good Thing

Her friends have nicknamed Rachel the Duracell Energizer Bunny in acknowledgment of her devotion to her exercise routine. A petite brunette in her midfifties, Rachel worries about the effects of aging on her physical appearance, so she exercises four to five hours every day. She's been doing this so long that she's now losing muscle mass. Her personal trainer describes the results: Rachel "is gaunt with more noticeable wrinkles on her face and her body is much flabbier than it used to be. . . . In between her aerobics and weight-training sessions she showers at the gym and blows her hair dry, putting on layers of makeup. She dons the mask of youth, but in my eyes and in the eyes of the other trainers, she looks like an old woman with layers of makeup."¹

Even healthful habits can become destructive.

This energizer bunny belongs to a group of people who are classified as exercise addicts. Knowing moderate amounts of exercise will lead to weight loss and increased health, they reason that greater amounts of exercise will result in greater weight loss and better health. What they don't realize is that excessive amounts are actually detrimental. In addition to advancing the effects of aging on one's appearance, exercising too much can also lead to loss of coordination and appetite, headaches, gastrointestinal issues, and loss of ability to ward off infection. The potential emotional effects of overexercising include irritability, apathy, depression, emotional sensitivity, and reduced self-esteem.² Thus even healthful habits can become destructive if they are followed intemperately.

We tend to think of temperance primarily in terms of substances we should not consume, but it should apply to every aspect of our lives. Our heavenly Father has designed us to live balanced lives. When we allow any one part of our life to overshadow all of the other parts, we are being intemperate. Then, because our finely tuned body has been thrown off balance, we experience physical, mental, and even moral weakening.

World-class athletes know self-control is necessary if they expect to perform to the best of their ability. Each aspect of their lives is carefully monitored to ensure it will not interfere with the accomplishment of their ultimate goal. We should likewise practice self-control, ensuring that we live in such a way that nothing will weaken our ability to reach our eternal goal (1 Cor. 9:25–27).

1. Debbie Mandel, "Hooked on the Pain: Exercise Addiction," SelfGrowth.com, <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Mandel4.html> (accessed February 15, 2009).

2. The American Council on Exercise, "Fit Facts," http://www.acefitness.org/fitfacts/pdfs/fitfacts/itemid_6.pdf (accessed February 15, 2009).

Avoid What Is Bad—Use in Moderation What Is Good

Gen. 9:20–27;
Prov. 20:1; 23:31–35;
1 Cor. 6:19; 10:31;
2 Pet. 1:5–9

The Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)

The culture of Corinth during the time of the apostles was similar to the modern-day obsession with materialism and self-gratification. Paul addressed many of the issues that the Christians in Corinth were struggling with. Conventional wisdom of the time claimed that whatever was done in the body had no impact on the spiritual and mental experience of a person. Therefore, many Corinthians indulged in intoxicating spirits, immoral activities, and gluttony with no thought of eternal consequences. Like many today, the Corinthians believed they were free to do with their bodies as they chose.

Paul pleads with us not to be fooled by popular belief. We are ultimately accountable to God for how we treat the bodies that He made and then purchased. Therefore, it is our duty to keep this temple in the best possible condition.

Hold on to Jesus Christ. Honor Him in all you do.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19 Paul compares the body to a temple. Most of us see the modern church as a place where people worship God. The understanding of the temple in biblical times included more than this. In addition to being a place where people went to worship, the temple was where God dwelled. For that reason, the entire building was holy. Likewise, it is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that hallows our body. Our bodies are not holy of themselves. They are sanctified by the holy God who abides in those people who have surrendered their lives to Him.

Temple Housekeeping (1 Cor. 10:31)

The broader application of 1 Corinthians 10:31 guides us as to how Christians are to conduct themselves in all situations. No matter what we are doing, we are to do it in a manner and spirit in which God can be glorified. In eating and drinking it is important for us to nourish our body temples in such a way that will promote the best possible health. In addition to the huge amount of information about healthful living available today, Seventh-day Adventists have been gifted with a health message through the writings of Ellen G. White. This message comprises clear guidelines on how to maintain our body temples. If we intentionally do something that we know is wrong, we have sinned (James 4:17).

A Lack of Self-Control = An Ineffective Christian (2 Pet. 1:5–9)

Self-control, the cornerstone of temperance, is mentioned in Peter's list of

attributes necessary for a fruitful Christian life. During the time Peter wrote this list—also known as “Peter’s ladder”³—many similar lists existed. However, all of them had a temporal, philosophical focus, while Peter’s list is a product of divine inspiration.

Self-control, or lack of it, impacts one’s destiny. Self-control is listed as a fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:23). If the Holy Spirit dwells within a person, the fruit of self-control will be evident in that person. Without self-control, our knowledge of Christ means nothing.

Results of Disobedience (Gen. 9:20–27; Prov. 20:1; 23:31–35)

The Bible records the results of drinking alcohol. Despite his wisdom, Solomon gave in to every tempting lust that assailed him, including alcohol (Eccles. 2:3). In hindsight, he warned against the folly of its use. He points out that consuming it leads to shame and violence, and that people under its influence easily disregard what is right and become scornful of godly matters.⁴

One of the saddest accounts in the Bible is found in Genesis 9:20–27. Following is a summary of the story and its corresponding lessons for us:

Noah became drunk and lay naked in his tent. How shameful for this mighty preacher of God, the man who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Our lesson? No matter what great things God has done for you and through you—do not take your salvation for granted.

Ham saw his father, and with much laughter told his brothers. Ham, a believer in what Noah preached, was now behaving like those who had scoffed at Noah as he built the ark. Our lesson? Once saved does not mean always saved. Do not let down your guard against sin.

Shem and Japheth maintained their uprightness of character. Our lesson? It does not matter if the people who gave you the good news are slipping and falling, don’t slip and fall with them. Furthermore, if members whom you came in with start to falter, do not be discouraged. Hold on to Jesus Christ. Honor Him in all you do.

It seems easier to give in to the lust of the flesh rather than be temperate, for what our human nature wants is opposite from what the Spirit wants (Gal. 5:17). To live a life that honors God means that we need to deny ourselves perceived pleasures. God never said that the road to salvation would be easy, but He did promise to help us overcome every trial (Ps. 50:15).

REACT

1. Why is it unsafe to indulge in harmful substances even in small amounts?
2. Does being temperate mean abstaining from evils only? What about the prospects of having too much of a good thing?

1. Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003), p. 376.

2. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 19 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 222.

3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 597.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1014.

The Will to Glorify God

1 Cor. 10:31

"God calls for a living sacrifice, not a dead or dying one. When we realize the requirements of God, we shall see that He requires us to be temperate in all things. The end of our creation is to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are His. How can we do this when we indulge the appetite to the injury of the physical and moral powers? God requires that we present our bodies a living sacrifice. Then the duty is enjoined on us to preserve that body in the very best condition of health, that we may comply with His requirements. 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'"¹

"God requires that His people be temperate in all things."

"Satan is no novice in the business of destroying souls. He well knows that he can lead men and women into wrong habits of eating and drinking, he has gained, in a great degree, the control of their minds and baser passions. In the beginning man ate of fruits of the earth, but sin brought into use the flesh of dead animals as food. This diet works directly against the spirit of true refinement and moral purity.

"God requires that His people be temperate in all things. The example of Christ, during that long fast in the wilderness, should teach His followers to repulse Satan when he comes under the guise of appetite. Then may they have influence to reform those who have been led astray by indulgence, and have lost moral power to overcome the weakness and sin that has taken possession of them. Thus may Christians secure health and happiness, in a pure, well-ordered life and a mind clear and untainted before God."²

"Physical inaction lessens not only mental but moral power. The brain nerves that connect with the whole system are the medium through which heaven communicates with man and affects the inmost life. Whatever hinders the circulation of the electric current in the nervous system, thus weakening the vital powers and lessening mental susceptibility, makes it more difficult to arouse the moral nature."³

REACT

1. Identify and list the things that hinder you from obtaining both physical and spiritual health.

2. What does Paul imply in 1 Corinthians 9:27? What is he saying about the mind's relation to the body?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 65.

2. *Temperance*, p. 162.

3. *Education*, p. 209.

Evidence

Works and Salvation

In the Old Testament, the word *grace* is translated from the Hebrew word *chen*. *Chen* usually describes the action of a superior person or being who is showing undeserved favor to an inferior.¹ In Ephesians, Paul used *charis* to describe God's grace. His letter is most likely a circular letter addressed to Ephesian believers in all the churches of Ephesus.² In it, he focuses on two themes: the church's spiritual privileges and the church's responsibilities. Among the privileges, Paul talks about the privilege of receiving God's grace.

Good works are the result of salvation, not the cause of it.

In Ephesians 2:8, 9, Paul points out that we are saved by grace through faith. It is God's unmerited favor toward us that forgives our sins and gifts us with salvation. It is our faith that believes this is so and enables us to accept God's grace. Paul makes it clear that it is also God's unmerited favor toward us that enables us to break sinful habits and to live in a way that honors God.

However, it is not enough to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Even the demons believe that, but this knowledge does not save them (James 2:19). Having access to the grace of God requires faith on the part of the sinner. This faith is not merely an abstract belief. It also involves obedience.

We are saved by God's grace through the faith we have in Him. And it is the grace of God that motivates us to do good works. We must remember that good works are the result of salvation, not the cause of it. Belief that accepts God's grace without any corresponding good deeds is worthless (James 2:26). Faith and actions work together so that our faith is made complete by our actions.

Practicing a diligent temperate life will not save anyone. The basis of our salvation is the grace of God. It is the strength of His love for His sin-fallen creatures that bridges the gap between the Creator and His lost children. It is the grace of God that also strengthens us to do good works. The only kind of faith that saves is the faith that responds in obedience and bears much good fruit. Jesus makes it clear that those who fail to produce good fruit will not be saved (Matt. 7:19).

REACT

1. What kind of fruit are you producing (see Galatians 5:16–26)?
2. Is there ever a proverbial fence to sit on when it comes to temperance?

1. J. D. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 433.

2. Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003), p. 423.

How-to
Temperance

1 Cor. 10:31;

2 Pet. 1:5-9

God is interested in all aspects of our lives, including our health. Our responsibility is to take care of our bodies so that whatever we do brings glory to Him. Most people think of what they eat and drink when they think of temperance. To many people, temperance is controlling the urge to eat or drink more than what is enough. However, temperance should also be applied to other aspects of life, such as watching television or movies, listening to music, surfing the Internet, spending money, selecting one's wardrobe, sleeping, talking, and even controlling one's imagination.

No one can force any one else to be temperate.

So how can we be temperate in all that we do, think, and say? Here are a few tips:

Prioritize. Start each day with prayer and Bible study, asking God to lead you through each step of the way as He desires, so that you will do what you need to do and not waste your time on things that are insignificant. Too many activities, even good activities, tend to complicate life and consume time so that we spend less time with God. Give your first and best attention to the things that matter most—the things of eternal value.

Know your limits. Ignorance is a lame excuse in this day and age when information is literally at our fingertips. Take time to learn about the dangers of excessiveness in anything and everything you do. We will be accountable on judgment day for knowing what is right but not doing it.

Draft a timetable or schedule. You do not have to strictly follow it, but a timetable can be a guide regarding how to spend your time doing the things you need to do for the day, the week, the month, and the year.

Be responsible. Temperance is a choice each of us has to make on his or her own. No one can force any one else to be temperate. Be diligent in all you do, think, and say for your own good, but even more so, for the glory of God.

REACT

1. In what areas of your life do you need to be more temperate?
2. As you review 2 Peter 1:5-9, ask yourself how you can apply the principles found there in your efforts to practice temperance.
3. What good activities are currently taking too much of your time at the expense of spending time with God?
4. How does a life lived temperately glorify God?

Vanessa Gelta, Madang, Papua New Guinea

Prov. 23:31, 32

Opinion

"Forbidden Pleasures"

"Laura Catagena swore off air conditioning, careerism, and sex . . . but her comfortable suburban upbringing only made it that much harder to try to live as Jesus would," stated the *Washington Post Magazine* on its front cover of January 25, 2009. In her cover article, "The Trouble With Saintliness," Darragh Johnson chronicles Laura's struggles between living a temperate lifestyle and resisting the temptation of forbidden pleasures.

Prisons are filled with intemperate people who could not control themselves.

For many, the word *temperance* means a long list of dos and don'ts. It often conjures up images of early twentieth century temperance societies with their posters and laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol. Living a life of temperance is often portrayed as a boring existence in which one is deprived of the pleasures of life. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

It means choosing what is best, regardless of immediate circumstances and temptations. When it comes to living a life of success or of failure, it is often temperance that draws the line between the two. Prisons are filled with intemperate people who could not control themselves. On the other hand, people who are successful have learned that self-control—temperance—is the path that led them to success.

Thomas Yellich, a philanthropy professional, says, "Our society is based on consumption. . . . More food, more drugs, more sex, just more of all things seems to be what will make us all happy eventually. Only it is not true." "Learn self-control, discipline, limits, [and] responsibility and not only will you become a better person, you will become happy."*

The irony of forbidden "pleasures" is that while the initial moment may be gratifying, the lasting results are often devastating. Rather than delivering freedom and happiness, intemperance delivers just the opposite—chains and misery. Read Proverbs 23:31, 32.

To be temperate is to use the mind that God has given you, recognizing that forbidden momentary pleasures do not bring lasting happiness, and choosing a better way.

*Thomas Yellich, response to Bill Gates, "A New Approach to Cap[italism in the 21st Century," http://creativecapitalism.typepad.com/creative_capitalism/2008/06/bill-gates-crea.html#comment-12-633912 (accessed May 5, 2009).

Exploration *Under Control*

Prov. 25:28;
1 Cor. 10:31;
Gal. 5:22, 23;
2 Pet. 1:5

CONCLUDE

Our fallen nature constantly drives us to satisfy our cravings without restraint. Often the results are regrettable. Our society is plagued with obesity, alcoholism, and drug addiction, showing clearly that we are reaping what we sowed. As Christians, we are not immune to self-gratification. We can be self-indulgent with our time, our bodies, and with other resources such as talents and money. We may even embrace excess in the name of a “good cause.” God’s model for us is one of balance in everything we do. Only in living a balanced life can we glorify God and find true contentment.

CONSIDER

- Designing a logo for a temperance fair. Consider changing the negative image the word *temperance* often has.
- Charting your daily activities for one week. Analyze your results to find out if any area of your life is overshadowing another.
- Rephrasing Luke 9:23. E-mail your paraphrase to some friends and ask what it means to them.
- Taking a walk in a nearby park. Document any instances in nature where you can observe temperance or balance.
- Writing an article on temperance for your school newspaper or church newsletter. Use 1 Corinthians 10:31 as your basis.
- Making a collage of things in your life that may require self-control, such as watching TV, reading, talking on the phone, surfing the Internet, listening to music, and any others you might think of.
- Writing the statement “By God’s power, I will choose what is best regardless of the circumstances.” Place it where you can see it every day.

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chapter 39.

Integrity: Wholeness and **Holiness**

“In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7, 8, NIV).



Introduction *How Can I Sin Against God?*

Gen. 39:9

I grew up in an environment in which cheating was part of life. The attitude was, the more you cheat, the smarter you are. What I learned from cheating, however, is that sooner or later everything will come out, and people will know who you really are. Some people think that they won't get caught, but they always do.

"I was just rectifying accounts," she said.

I remember a pharmacy technician in my country who was a student at a private university. She always seemed to have money for everything she wanted. One day, her coworker asked her where all of her money was coming from, because the coworker suspected she was stealing money from the company. The technician said that her mother was giving her money, but her coworker didn't believe her. One day the coworker watched as the technician sold a medicine, but failed to record the purchase. Instead, she put the money in her pocket. Eventually she was fired. She justified her actions by saying that she should have been paid more. "I was just rectifying accounts," she said.

Willpower, morality, and spirituality are centered in the brain's frontal lobe.* So, having a healthy brain will help us to have a better relationship with God. We need to be careful about the type of lifestyle we lead, because our lifestyle affects our frontal lobe. Many things affect the activity of the frontal lobe. Among them are the diet we choose, exercise, television programs and movies we watch, computer games we play, the types of books we read, and the music we listen to.

If you are struggling with the issue of integrity—living up to what you believe—consider eating more healthfully. Remember that you are what you eat! Study the example of Daniel, who decided to be faithful to God and not to eat the food the king offered him. As a result, he was found to be ten times wiser than the young men who ate the royal food (Dan. 1:15–20). Also consider Joseph, who considered integrity crucial to his relationship with God, regardless of his circumstances.

This week, as you study integrity and its relationship to health, holiness, and wholeness, may you be inspired to nourish both your body and your soul.

REACT

What made Daniel and Joseph strong enough to remain true to what they believed, despite the fact that their lives were in jeopardy?

*Dr. Neil Nedley, *Renewing the Mind: The Frontal Lobe*, <http://neilnedleynd.revivevideo.com/index.htm#msg04> (accessed March 9, 2009).

Eph. 3:14–21

Evidence *Integrity Is Health to My Body*

Integrity comprises perceived consistency of actions, values, methods, measures and principles.¹ Based on this definition, Robin Hood had integrity. Because he wanted to help the poor, he stole resources from the rich and gave those resources to the needy. His actions were consistent with his values. But were his actions Christ-centered? As followers of Christ, we should aspire to act based on His value system rather than on the actions of someone like Robin Hood!

What if we decide to compromise our faith, to act counter to what we believe?

Personal integrity produces positive hormones in our body so that we can enjoy happiness and health. But what if we don't measure up? What if we decide to compromise our faith, to act counter to what we believe? The result is stress.

Over the last few decades, medicine has discovered that several illnesses and health problems are exacerbated or caused by unresolved stress. Dr. Neil Nedley lists some of these illnesses: cancer, asthma, random aches and pains, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, anxiety, acne, ulcers and gastroesophageal reflux, psoriasis, colds and other viral upper respiratory infections, influenza, diabetes, tuberculosis, and rheumatoid arthritis.²

Our ultimate goal for good mental health is to “be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19, NIV). Our integrity should match the integrity Christ modeled for us when He lived on earth. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13, NIV). So what is God's value system? He outlines it in Exodus 20, Galatians 5:22, 23, and 1 John 3.

REACT

1. Consider the life you are currently living. Does it show that you have integrity?
2. Is your value system the same as Christ's—or is it more like Robin Hood's?
3. What areas of your life might conflict with your value system?
4. How can you resolve these areas of conflict?
5. After ruling out any physical causes for a health problem, how might your health be suffering from a lack of integrity on your part?

1. “Integrity,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integrity> (accessed March 9, 2006).

2. Dr. Neil Nedley, *Proof Positive* (Ardmore, Okla.: Nedley Publishing, 1999), p. 333.

Is Your Life Aligned With His?

Gen. 39:6–12;
1 Sam. 24:1–10;
Dan. 6:1–10;
Matt. 4:1–11;
Rom. 1:25–27;
Eph. 3:14–21

A basic definition of integrity is this: when your ways match your words. And biblical integrity is when your ways match God's Word, when your whole life is aligned with His will and His ways. Let's take a look at some people in Scripture who lived in alignment with the heart of our Father.

What can we do when integrity breaks down?

Aligning Our Roles (Gen. 39:6–12)

Joseph had two basic roles. He was a child of God and the manager of Potiphar's household. Because his roles were in alignment with his first allegiance to God and his second to humanity, he was able resist the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. Now some might say, "But look where his integrity got him! Prison!" Yes, in the short term, integrity often takes us down a difficult road. However, in the long term, we shall never regret putting God first. Ultimately, Joseph became Pharaoh's right-hand man (see Genesis 40 and 41). Ultimately, he became a blessing to his father's house.

Aligning Our Resentments (1 Sam. 24:1–10)

In Romans we read, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19, NASB). David showed integrity when he refused to allow resentment toward Saul, who was seeking to kill him, to lead him down the path of personal revenge. How often do we attempt to get even, only to find that we have gotten bitter? Granted, some of us may have been threatened, abused, raped, molested, or wrongly accused. But, the dark side of defending and avenging ourselves is that we end up trapped in anger, resentment, and unforgiveness. In contrast, biblical integrity is when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, putting them in God's hands and allowing Him to be our vindicator.

Aligning Our Worship (Dan. 6:1–10)

Like David, Daniel trusted God to be his vindicator. His very name means "God is my Judge." And through an experiential understanding of God's justice, protection, and provision (Daniel 1, 2, 5), Daniel arrived at a place of radical integrity in worship. When faced with the threat of being thrown to the lions, he kept worshipping because he had spent a lifetime learning to trust in God as his defender.

As Adventists, we are called to proclaim the message "Fear God, and give

Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters' ” (Rev. 14:7, NASB). Like David and Daniel, we are a people who worship God in part because He is our Judge. And in spite of what others might say or do to us, our way of life must become our way of worship.

Aligning Our Identity

Worship was certainly Jesus' way of life. And the reason He worshiped with such integrity was that His identity was aligned with the word of His Father. At His baptism, the Father declared, “ ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’ ” (Matt. 3:17, NASB). And when tempted by the devil to turn the stones to bread, Christ declared, “ ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD’ ” (Matt. 4:4, NASB). In other words, Satan said, “If you are God's son, prove it by turning the stones to bread.” But Christ understood that our identity is defined not by what we do, but by what God has done, by what God has said. And God declares to us that in Christ, we are His beloved!

When God affirmed Jesus after His baptism, and said, “ ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,’ ” He said it to us. As a result, your prayers, through faith in your substitute, Jesus Christ, are accepted by the Father.¹

Out of Alignment (Rom. 1:26, 27)

Romans paints a picture of a people who have experienced a breakdown in integrity—a people who have lost their identity. They have become disconnected from God and, as a result, have unhealthy relationships with one another; exchanging natural relationships for unnatural ones. Their failure to trust in God's Word and provision led to moral and spiritual perversion.

Aligning Our Prayers (Eph. 3:14–21)

What can we do when integrity breaks down? Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 reveals a powerful way to strengthen our integrity and the integrity of others. In praying for others to find wholeness in their inner being, we ourselves are strengthened. In praying for them to know the “love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (verse 19, NRSV), we find ourselves lost in the depths of His love.

“The highest glory of Christ upon His sovereign throne today is the glory of His prevailing intercession. . . . There is no more Christlike role than to be a co-intercessor with Christ for the priorities upon His heart. In no other way can the Christian be of greater strength and blessing to Christ's church. In no other way can you do more to advance Christ's kingdom and bring glory to the name of Jesus.”²

1. *1888 Materials*, p. 124.

2. Wesley Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990), p. 27.

Integrity Role Model and Influence

Prov. 11:3

My parents sacrificed much to help others. Observing them, I have grown to appreciate the value of integrity. Their example has built within me a desire to do what I can to use my God-given talents for the benefit of others.

“God desires us to make use of every opportunity for securing a preparation for His work. He expects us to put all our energies into its performance and to keep our hearts alive to its sacredness and its fearful responsibilities.”¹

“When you lose your conscious integrity, your soul becomes a battlefield for Satan.”

“When you lose your conscious integrity, your soul becomes a battlefield for Satan; you have doubts and fears enough to paralyze your energies and drive you to discouragement.”² Review Psalm 25:21 and Ephesians 4:15.

It is interesting that while helping the poor, we are advised to “keep always in view their spiritual needs.”³ We are to meet people where they are and educate them, not in pride, but in character building. Life’s best things—simplicity, honesty, truthfulness, purity, integrity—cannot be bought or sold. For everyone, God has provided much good pleasure that may be enjoyed by both rich and poor alike. Pleasure is found in cultivating pure thoughts and unselfish actions. Pleasure comes from speaking sympathizing words and doing kind deeds.

From those who perform such service, the light of Christ shines to brighten lives darkened by many shadows. “Integrity, self-denial, and humility should characterize our lives.”⁴

“It is essential that you cultivate faithfulness in little things, and in so doing you will acquire habits of integrity in greater responsibilities. The little incidents of everyday life often pass without our notice, but it is these things that shape the character. Every event of life is great for good or for evil.”⁵

Thousands upon thousands of human beings are perishing. There is great work to be done. Are you doing all you can to help?

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 498.

2. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 321.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 198.

4. *Medical Ministry*, p. 131.

5. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 270.

Num. 23:19;
Ps. 20:7;
Titus 2:7

How-to *The Integrity-Woven Character*

Cloth is woven with a shuttle filled with yarn, going in and out, in and out, until finally, there is a beautiful piece of fabric. So are our characters woven on a daily basis, with thoughts going in and out, in and out, all day long. It's so easy, just once, to plagiarize a paper or tell that "little white lie." The key is to make sure that all of our thoughts are of the purest quality possible. How do we maintain the integrity of our thoughts?

Every day, every response to each thought is a choice.

Our highest example of integrity is God. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind" (NIV). To meet such a high standard ourselves, we must daily adhere to God's values with brutal honesty, all day long, for the thoughts in our minds weave in and out, in and out all day long.

Closeness to our Lord is the only way to achieve integrity. Satan is trying to slip into our decision-making process. One must always choose to be honest. This does not come naturally. Every day, every response to each thought is a choice. Only God's leading can keep us strong enough to make the right choice. Through daily Bible study one can stay close to Him.

Trust in the Lord to lead you. Psalm 20:7 says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (NIV). If we are in constant contact with Him through prayer, we can hear and learn to trust His whisperings, His leading.

Stand firm when the winds of evil blow over you. Pressure to make an unwise choice will be there, always. Prove yourself before God and other people. Titus 2:7 says, "In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility" (NKJV). "An honest man, according to Christ's measurement, is one who will manifest unbending integrity. . . . Firm integrity shines forth as gold amid the dross and rubbish of the world."*

Stand firm, so that your cloth of character will be beautifully woven with integrity.

REACT

How do you think people see your character?

* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 310.

Opinion
*Strength for Your
Inner Being*

Eph. 3:16, 17

Today's text shows Paul petitioning God for church members to surrender their inner being to the Spirit so that Christ may dwell in them. How does that concept of inner strength become real in your life? Let me tell you what it means in mine.

If "men look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7, NIV), then I believe God would rather have an inner conviction than the outward display I try so hard to show the world—an inner conviction that will help me to do what is right even when no one else is looking. For me this means not yielding to the temptation to view pornography on my computer, pushing my chair back from the table before I eat too much, following through with private commitments with as much integrity as I would for my

"How do you become the person you desire to be?"

employer, and showing hospitality to those in need even though I don't connect with their personality.

But how can you or I expect to become transformed into the likeness of Christ if we ignore the "inner being" issues? "How do you become the person you desire to be? You start now to adopt the thinking, learn the skills, and develop the habits of the person you wish to be. It's a mistake to daydream about 'one day when you'll be on top' instead of handling today so that it prepares you for tomorrow."¹ It's easy for me to read the preceding lines in light of my career and think, *Wow, great stuff!* But it's more difficult to take it to heart in my relationship with God, because it requires tough decisions and commitment. Yet this kind of commitment is exactly what God wants. "The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed, and always will fail. God's plan with you is to begin at the very seat of all difficulties, the heart, and then from out of the heart will issue the principles of righteousness; the reformation will be outward as well as inward."²

Are you convinced? Join me! Become purposeful about giving in to the Spirit in order to strengthen your "inner being." Let God create in you a heart that will not be bought or sold, a heart that will be whole and holy when it's just you and your Lord.

1. John C. Maxwell, *The 360 Degree Leader* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 9.

2. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 35.

Titus 2:7, 8

Exploration

The Value of Biblical Integrity

CONCLUDE

God values integrity. Having integrity means that your actions match your words. The Bible is full of examples of people who displayed true biblical integrity, people who lived lives consistent with the Bible and with God's leading in their lives. They put God's ways above their own. We can develop and maintain biblical integrity by adhering to His values, spending time with Him, trusting Him and His leading in our lives, and standing firm in what we believe. God wants to make these life changes in us beginning in our heart and moving outward to our actions.

CONSIDER

- Making a collage that demonstrates what integrity means to you. Use pictures from magazines, personal photos, and small objects to get your point across.
- Talking with someone who you think demonstrates biblical integrity. Find out from them some of their habits and practices that help them maintain this trait.
- Writing about a time in your life when your integrity was tested and what the outcome of that testing was.
- Looking over the life of Daniel and listing all of the traits that demonstrate his biblical integrity. Then, rank these traits in order of importance.
- Committing to ten days of the "Daniel Diet" (Daniel 1), which includes raw foods, nuts (if you are not allergic to them), fruits, and vegetables. After the ten days, determine if, as with Daniel, you feel better physically, spiritually, and mentally.
- Choosing someone you know who recently has displayed a lack of integrity and commit to praying regularly that the Holy Spirit will move upon that person's heart to change his or her ways.

CONNECT

The Sanctified Life, chapter 2; *Education*, chapter 7.

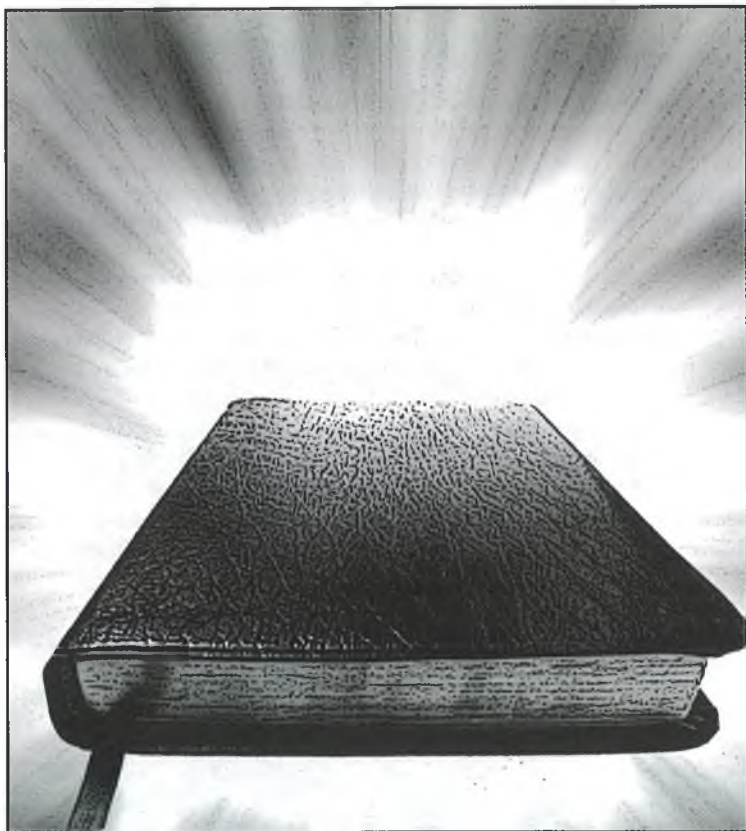
Mark D. Rasche, "Biblical Integrity," <http://www.icr.org/article/1773/> (accessed April 2, 2009).

lesson eleven

JUNE 5-12

Optimism: Happiness and **Healing**

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:21-23, NIV).



Ps. 27:1, 14

Introduction

Looking Ahead With Hope

In face of the economic downturn, wars, food shortages, and the constant changes we have to contend with daily, we all are faced with discouraging situations that sometimes make life seem too difficult to bear. So many people are falling victim to depression because of their social and economic situations, while other people become exhausted and sick as a result of personal difficulties and stress.

As depression increases, the body's defenses become weakened.

As depression increases, the body's defenses become weakened. But how thankful we can be that the Word of God, the Bible, is filled with messages of hope—messages that when contemplated and lived can inspire and strengthen the fainting soul. These messages also can restore physical health to bodies made sick with worry or sadness. David most likely wrote our texts for today when he was a fugitive hiding in the wilderness.¹ Read them now if you haven't already done so. Such texts can inspire us today to keep going when the going gets tough. Of these verses, we read, "Fear is a dark shadow that envelops us and ultimately imprisons us within ourselves. Each of us has been a prisoner of fear at one time or another—fear of rejection, misunderstanding, uncertainty, sickness, or even death. But we can conquer fear by using the bright liberating light of the Lord who brings salvation."² "The psalm closes with a repetition of the injunction: 'Wait, I say, on the Lord,' as if the psalmist would fix deep in our minds the idea that at all times of doubt and danger, instead of despairing, we should go forward 'in the strength of the Lord God' (see Ps. 71:16)."³

God's Word, the sacrifice of His only Son, His demonstrated love and faithfulness throughout our lives, and His daily presence in our lives should regularly inspire us to hope for a better future, both in this life and in eternity. God has the answers we need, and He has granted us access to them in the Bible. This week we will explore the unique link between optimism, well-being, and the healing of body and mind.

REACT

How is it that the Bible carries the answers to all of life's dilemmas?

1. *Education*, p. 164.

2. *Life Application Study Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1991), p. 929.

3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 697.

Logos
A Strong Heart

1 Kings 19:2–18;
Psalm 27; 42;
Luke 8:14; 10:38–42;
Rom. 8:35–39;
2 Cor. 12:9, 10;
1 Thess. 5:16–18

A Fearless Strong Heart (Psalm 27; 42)

David's life surely had many challenges and trials. He expresses some of these quite vividly in Psalm 27. But in doing so, he also comforts and assures us. When life is difficult and when things seem to be going the wrong way for us, we must remember that God is with us still. David's advice is that we must wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Him involves trusting in His providence and in His ability. It entails having confidence that He will do what He says and lead where He promises. Knowing that God is there for us in these ways should encourage our hearts to be strong. A strong heart is able to withstand many of life's challenges, while a weak heart faints at any trial and will not be able to withstand the challenges of life.

When faith grows, anxiety lessens.

Only One Thing Is Needed (Luke 10:42)

Both Mary and Martha were disciples of Jesus. They both loved the Lord and devoted their lives to Him. Yet they approached discipleship in different ways. Even with Jesus in her house, Martha remained overly distracted by all the preparations needed to entertain the guest. Most likely these preparations were for their meal together. Mary, however, sat with Jesus so that she might hear what He had to say. Jesus knew that neither Mary nor Martha could live by bread alone (Matt. 4:4). He knew that there are times when feeding on the spiritual bread of His Word would be more important than feeding on bread from the oven. In Martha's case, the "many things" (Luke 10:41, NIV) distracting her from Christ's presence were not bad in themselves. The point here is that sometimes we can fill up our lives with "good things" to the point that we neglect our soul's needs. Sometimes we are so busy doing things *for* Christ, that we fail to spend quality time *with* Him.

Martha being troubled refers to her "outward demeanor, in contrast with her inner feelings. She was 'anxious' inwardly, and as a result 'troubled' outwardly. If we would only seek to cultivate that inward composure that Martha so much needed we would avoid much unnecessary anxiety."¹

God does not bless us with good families, loving friends, well-paying and satisfying jobs, along with other gifts and abilities, just so we have excuses to abandon a close walk with Him. Always remember as Mary must have remembered—that without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Our State of Mind (Matt. 6:31, 32)

Anxiety is a killer. Many of the physical and mental illnesses of our present age are stress related. However, when faith grows, anxiety lessens. This is what Jesus wanted Martha learn. This is part of what He taught in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, “‘Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them’ ” (Matt. 6:31, 32, NIV). Having the correct set of priorities—putting His kingdom first—will reduce your chances of a heart attack!

Many chose to listen to the Lord. But if we are too busy to commune with Him, to pray, to study His word, to meditate on life’s purpose, and to enjoy a peaceful, private time with Him, our hearts will be troubled with life’s daily cares, wearing down our bodies and minds so that we will be weakened by illnesses small and large.

God Loves You (Jer. 31:3)

In Jeremiah 31:3, God said to the Israelites, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” As the object of God’s love, the apostle Paul could say that he knew in whom he believed (2 Tim. 1:12). In Romans 8:35–39, he declares that all true believers are the object of God’s love. Because this is so, nothing or no one can separate us from God’s salvation and deliverance. His love should inspire us to look at life positively, to expect good things to happen, and to live with the confidence that He will take care of us.

“God reaches toward his people with kindness motivated by deep and everlasting love. He is eager to do the best for them if they will only let him. After many words of warning about sin, this reminder of God’s magnificent love is a breath of fresh air. Rather than thinking of God with dread, look carefully and see him lovingly drawing us toward himself.”²

When life deals us blows, we are to know that all that truly matters is safe with the Lord. Such a state of mind will lead to a good state of health. His promises are many. Let them be your guide (Deut. 33:29; Ps. 4:8; 56:3; 91:1, 2; 1 John 4:4).

REACT

1. How does the fact that God has already provided our salvation inspire you to live positively?
2. If you are anxious about something in your life, do things to increase your faith. Be sure to notice how an increase in faith makes you feel physically.
3. How can we demonstrate our assurance of salvation to others so they will be inspired to follow the Lord?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 785.

2. *Life Application Study Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1991), p. 1342.

"Joy . . . Never Failing"

Prov. 17:22

"The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death. . . .

"Let us educate our souls to be hopeful. . . ."

"Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul."¹

"Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father's house?

"Those professed Christians who are constantly complaining, and who seem to think cheerfulness and happiness a sin, have not genuine religion. . . .

"It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that thoughts follow words. If we would give more expression to our faith, rejoice more in the blessings that we know we have,—the great mercy and love of God,—we should have more faith and greater joy. No tongue can express, no finite mind can conceive, the blessing that results from appreciating the goodness and love of God. Even on earth we may have joy as a well-spring, never failing, because fed by the streams that flow from the throne of God.

"Then let us educate our hearts and lips to speak the praise of God for His matchless love. Let us educate our souls to be hopeful, and to abide in the light shining from the cross of Calvary. Never should we forget that we are children of the heavenly King, sons and daughters of the Lord of hosts. It is our privilege to maintain a calm repose in God."²

REACT

Take time to praise God for five things. Think about each item for one minute. Note how you feel at the end of this exercise.

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–253.

Third John begins with an identification of its author and the person to whom it is written, followed by a thanksgiving and a wish for the well-being of the recipient. John addresses Gaius as his “dear friend.” While this suggests cordiality, it is probably not strong enough to capture the meaning of the Greek word used here (*agapetos*), which means “beloved.” Love is not simply affection or attachment but the God-given bond that unites Christians. And John’s statement that he loves Gaius “in the truth” points to the double-stranded cord that unites them: they are held together not only by love but also by the truth they share.

Love is not simply affection or attachment.

The wish for good health is typical of ancient letters, and here it is really a prayer. Specifically, John prays that Gaius “may enjoy good health” and “that all may go well with” him, “even as [his] soul is getting along well” (verse 2, NIV). The word translated “soul” (*psyche*) refers to every aspect of personhood. In the Gospel of John Jesus is said to lay down his *psyche*, which means more than to give his “soul” (see John 10:15, 17, 18). John’s confidence that Gaius is “getting along well” with respect to his soul does not therefore merely point to his soul being saved. Instead it is referring to both spiritual and moral health in light of accepting Jesus and obeying His commands.

When we consider it a duty to praise God and to be optimistic about our future as Christians despite the worldly conditions around us, our physical health also will benefit. Many research studies are showing this to be true. One such study was done at Carnegie Mellon University. Dr. Sheldon Cohen and his colleagues studied 193 healthy men and women between the ages of 21 and 55. Results showed that participants “with high scores for positive emotional style were more likely to resist colds and flu.” The researcher wrote that these “results indicate that positive emotions play a larger and more important role in disease risk and health complaints than previously believed.”*

REACT

1. What have you done recently to highlight hope and prosperity to those around you?
2. What does the Bible say about living peaceably with all people? See Romans 12:18. How can this contribute to both spiritual and physical health?

*Miranda Hitti, “Happiness Good for Health,” WebMD, <http://www.webmd.com/news/20061110/happiness-good-for-health> (accessed February 10, 2009).

Living Well Despite Life's Challenges

Genesis 6; 7; 12:1-7;
Gal. 5:22-26

We live in a world of uncertainties and changes. Many things are often beyond our control. How we manage these events depends on how we see and react to them. Optimism is hoping for and expecting the best out of life. It entails patience and perseverance.

When we believe that we are controlled by situations, and when we whine and complain, we not only expose ourselves to defeat but weaken our resolve to be happy. Those who are optimistic in one situation will not only gain the courage to practise optimism the next time there is a problem but also will be developing their hearts and minds to withstand future challenges.

Give your worries . . . to the Lord in prayer. Then leave them there.

How does one develop optimism?

Take the step of faith. Many of us are depressed because we never try to trust. We refuse to walk in faith. It wasn't until Peter stepped into the water that he knew he could walk on it. Unless we take the first step, we cannot go anywhere.

Trust in God. Trusting Him does not mean abandoning common sense and action. It does mean that despite circumstances you will believe and have faith that God's promises will be fulfilled in your life. Noah trusted God, even though it had never rained before. Abraham trusted God even though God didn't tell him where he was going.

Pray. Many of us are not optimistic because we do not spend a great deal of time in prayer. Those who struggle with their burdens and refuse to give them to the Lord continue to carry those burdens. Give your worries and anxiety to the Lord in prayer. Then leave them there.

Live a healthy lifestyle. Research has shown that exercise and eating healthful foods can help us to be happy. Exercise brings oxygen to every part of the body. This keeps us alert and strong. Good food helps us to fight colds, flu, cancers, and other health problems. When we feel well because we have taken care of our bodies, it is easier to be optimistic about life's challenges.

People who fear life's circumstances block the work of God in their lives and cannot therefore experience the fullness of life. However, optimistic people walk through life with courage and hope. Their lives bear much fruit.

REACT

Review the steps above. Choose two that you need to work on. Then develop and work a plan that will help you to do so.

Jackson Watembu, Ronkai, Kenya, East Africa

Rom. 13:11, 12

Opinion

*"It Draweth Nigh,
Awake From Sleep"*

"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:11, 12, NKJV).

The world is full of maggots.

We are called to do God's will. Many people say that Christ has delayed, and thus He has not kept His promise to return and take us to heaven. I believe, however, that He has not delayed as many think of delay. Instead, He "is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV). He and his angels are working to win many of us to their side.

A story is told of a pastor who kept ducks and chickens. Once, he received an invitation to preach in a church far away. So he prepared enough food for his poultry to eat while he was gone. When he returned a week later, he was shocked to discover that the young chicks and ducks were in the latrine outside of his house. He took a spotlight and looked in the latrine. When he saw maggots' wriggling there, he realized they had fallen in. They would rather have maggots to eat than the good food he had left for them.

The world is full of maggots placed by Satan in hopes of catching us in his snares. But we praise Jesus, because, like the pastor who rescued his ducklings and chicks, He wants to rescue us from the cares of the world and draw us close to God.

REACT

1. What are some of the ways the devil attacks us?
2. How you can avoid the devil's snares? Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.
3. How has God helped you when you were tempted by Satan?
4. Are you as concerned as God is that not any should perish under the deceptions of Satan? If your answer is no, can you think why you might feel that way? What can you do to change your mind?
5. Review Romans 13:11, 12. How is "putting on the armor of light" (NKJV) a metaphor for being optimistic?

Exploration *My Peace I Give*

Phil. 4:6, 7

CONCLUDE

Diseases without remedy, adverse climate changes, and financial crises are just a few of the problems making men and women's hearts fail them for fear. God has not left His people helpless or hopeless. He has given to each person "a measure of faith" that is best used when placed in Him (Rom. 12:3). Through faith in God and His Word, we have at our disposal the strength to overcome any challenge we may face. To be at peace, we must use what we have to get what we need from a God willing to supply our every need.

CONSIDER

- Watching your local evening newscast for the next five days. Create a chart showing the number of positive stories versus those that were negative. How might a constant barrage of the nightly news shape one's mental state?
- Making a list of the top ten stressors in your life. Try to come up with two positive ways to handle each source of stress. Then calculate the amount of time you lose each week by negatively responding to the stresses in your life.
- Rewriting John 14:27 and Matthew 11:2–30 in your own words, beginning with this statement: "God is telling me that . . ."
- Thinking of a stressful time in your life. How did God help you get through it? Create a spoken-word testimony of your deliverance by playing a favorite piece of Christian music in the background as you record your personal testimony.
- Reading Romans 1:18–23. A lack of thankfulness by the Romans contributed to their mental depravity. Think of someone in your life for whom you are thankful. Cook or bake them something to let them know you appreciate them.
- Organizing an agape feast at your home or apartment. Invite several friends and acquaintances to attend. Ask your guests to share something for which they would like special prayer or support. Take a moment to pray for the requests.
- Thinking about a challenge in your life that you have failed to surrender to God. Meditate on James 4:2 and 1 Peter 5:7. Why not surrender your challenge to God right now?

CONNECT

The Ministry of Healing, chapter 18.

Philip Yancey, *Prayer*, chapter 11.

Nutrition in the **Bible**

*"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the
glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NIV).*



Introduction
Go to Health!

1 Cor. 10:31

It's nearly the middle of the year—so, how are those New Year's resolutions coming along? You know, the ones about eating better (less junk food, more fruits and veggies), getting more exercise (fewer video games), and taking care of yourself?

The need to live a healthful lifestyle isn't just a good idea.

It's amazing how many people make those resolutions on or near January 1—and then abandon them by, say, January 3, if not sooner. But the need to live a healthful lifestyle isn't just a good idea, it's part of what God wants us to do.

I once heard someone say, "Kids don't come with an instruction manual." Well, that's not true. The Bible has loads to say about child rearing and also about how we should feed ourselves—as kids and as adults. In fact, God loves us so much, He gave us specific instructions about what foods to eat, starting in the Bible's first chapter, Genesis 1:29: " 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food' " (NIV). From there, He gets quite specific about what we should—and should not—eat. So, we don't need to guess about which fad diet will give us the best energy, appearance, or health. We only need to see what good foods God has set before us.

God's instructions about food aren't a narrative or something to make all those "begats" more interesting. The One who created us is the One who cares about us, so much so that He wants us to be healthy; and so much of our health can be determined by what we eat. Just ask successful athletes. Before a major competition, they make sure to eat the right foods that will supply needed energy. They also make sure they don't eat foods that will detract from their performance.

The Bible's thrust about proper nutrition has all sorts of implications, as we see from 1 Corinthians 10:31. Implicit in doing all "for the glory of God" is that He is watching us. Just as very young children want to please their parents, God delights in His children seeking to please Him. But also, doesn't this suggest that others are watching? Jesus said that when we do good, we are glorifying God (Matt. 5:16). Won't a healthful lifestyle be a part of that? We'll learn that, and more, this week.

Exod. 15:26;
Lev. 11:44, 45;
Num. 11:4–34;
Daniel 1

Evidence *What Is Your Food Saying?*

Leviticus 11 gives God's perspective on nutrition. The children of Israel were to walk, talk, and eat like His holy people should. The Egyptian diet on which they had lived for nearly four hundred years included many of the foods that were permissible for the children of Israel to eat. Many Egyptologists have concluded that the upper class ate the most meat, while the poorer class consumed more fruits and vegetables that grew in the rich soil around the Nile.

Can too much of a good thing be bad?

Numbers 11:4–34 reveals how seriously God considered the link between food and spirituality. "God gave the people that which was not for their highest good, because they persisted in desiring it. . . . They were left to suffer the result. . . . 'The Lord smote the people with a very great plague.'"¹ If the food was clean, why did God smite them with a plague? Perhaps it was because they lusted after meat so much that they lost sight of God. Can too much of a good thing be bad? God certainly seems to think so.

When the children of Israel eventually reached the Promised Land, historians say that their diet consisted mainly of fruits and vegetables because they made their livelihood from their livestock. When they did kill their animals, it was usually for sacrificial purposes or special occasions.

In Britain during World War II, strict food rationing meant that people ate less fat as well as fewer eggs and less meat and sugar. Studies today suggest that this type of diet reduces the risk of contracting cancer, heart disease, and other degenerative illnesses.² We certainly know how rampant cancer is among society and that it is even increasing in our church.

God has shown us which foods are for our best good because He loves us so much. The benefits of eating according to His nutritional plan are both physical and spiritual. In these last days He is calling us to be last-day Daniels. Will you respond to the Master's call?

REACT

1. How can what you eat witness to others of your commitment to God?
2. What is the difference between God's ultimate will and His permitted will?
3. What does your diet say about your attitude toward God?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 382.

2. T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell II, *The China Study* (Dallas, Tex.: BenBella Books, 2006).

The Original Diet (Gen. 1:26–30)

The original diet was vegan. It consisted of grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables.¹ It appears to be similar to what Daniel and his companions ate (Dan. 1:11–15, 19, 20). An increasing number of dieticians and scientists today are verifying that a vegan diet produces optimal health.²

The people were obviously having serious withdrawal symptoms.

God allowed the survivors of the Flood to eat animals (Gen. 9:3, 4). The Bible records the age of selected biblical characters from both before the Flood and after. As it turns out, the addition of meat had the effect of slashing the life span considerably. Pre-Flood life spans often topped the 900-year mark, with Methuselah falling shy of 1,000 years at 969 (Gen. 5:27). However, Lamech lived to only 777 (Gen. 5:31), with Abraham cruising in at a grand age of 175 (Gen. 25:7). By the time of David, the average life span was down to 70 years.

The Vertical Connection (Gen. 7:1, 2; 8:20)

God told Noah to take into the ark seven of each kind of clean animal and two of each kind of unclean animal. Soon after the Flood, Noah sacrificed some of those clean animals. This sacrifice was acceptable to God. Although unstated in Genesis, Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 confirm that God allowed the use of only clean animals for food. Just as God accepted the use of only clean animals in sacrifices offered to Him, so it appears that if human beings were to adopt the use of meat in their diet, God would accept the use of only the best—certain clean animals. There is a hint here of a connection between what we eat and our relationship with God—perhaps a link between the quality of our nutrition and the quality of our worship. The apostle Paul seems to support this in Romans 12:1 and 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Food for a Holy People (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14)

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 list the categories of animal foods that are clean and unclean. Of the animals that live on the land, those that have both split hooves and chew the cud were considered clean. Of the creatures that live in water, only those with both fins and scales were to be used for food. God gave similar directives for birds and winged insects. Anyone who ate an unclean creature or touched its carcass was considered unclean. In Leviticus 11:43–46, God makes it clear that eating anything unclean is unacceptable for a people who belong to a

holy God. Deuteronomy 14:21 forbids an Israelite to eat anything found dead, but the carcass could be donated or sold to a foreigner for food. God's people were set apart by God and were therefore holy. So for the Israelite, the choice of foods eaten appears to be an integral part of being holy.

Angel Food Versus Egyptian Delights (Exodus 16)

God did not intend for the children of Israel to continue eating flesh foods. Soon after their escape from Egypt, He tried to wean them from such foods with manna, or "angel food" as it's often called. However, the people were obviously having serious withdrawal symptoms from the fleshpots of Egypt. In the end, God allowed them to continue to eat flesh foods.

A Fly in the Theological Soup (Rom. 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5)

Some of the Jewish members in the early New Testament church were so entrenched in the legal matters of the ceremonial laws and other concerns that they longed to force their views on new believers. Quite often the debate revolved around which food was permitted or not permitted. In Romans 14:15-17 Paul advised those who were more mature in their understanding of doctrinal matters not to pass judgment on those who were perhaps weak in their development, but to focus on the "weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23, NKJV). A similar case is evident in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. Here Paul categorizes those forcing their pet beliefs on others as those who "will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (verse 1, NIV).

A Food Illustration (Acts 10:1-28)

Some commentators consider Peter's vision as proof that God endorses the use of unclean meats. An adoption of this view, however, would be a misinterpretation of the text, which is simply an illustration to help Peter to overcome his prejudice toward Gentile converts. Up to that point, the Gentiles were considered unclean. Peter got the point. If God is no respecter of persons, neither should he be.

Eat Drink and Be Merry? (Prov. 23:19-21)

In Proverbs 23:19-21 Solomon advises against associating with those who have tendencies toward greed and intemperance regarding food and drink.

REACT

1. If a vegan diet represents the ideal, why did God permit the survivors of the Flood to eat meat?
2. What about today? Should we aim for a vegan diet, a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet, or a clean-meat diet? Explain your answer.
3. If the consumption of meat is the best option available, how important is it that it is free of fat or blood? (See Genesis 9:4.)

1. *Health and Happiness*, p. 123.

2. Campbell and Campbell, *The China Study*, p. 242.

Small Decisions; Big Consequences

Deuteronomy 14

"The history of Daniel and his companions has been recorded on the pages of the inspired word, for the benefit of the youth of all succeeding ages. . . .

"The time came when they must act for themselves."

"Those who, like Daniel, refuse to defile themselves, will reap the reward of their temperate habits. With their greater physical stamina and increased power of endurance, they have a bank of deposit upon which to draw in case of emergency.

"Right physical habits promote mental superiority. . . . Daniel and his companions enjoyed the benefits of correct training and education in early life, but these advantages alone would not have made them what they were. The time came when they must act for themselves—when their future depended upon their own course."¹

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah "were not only to be admitted to the royal palace, but it was provided that they should eat of the meat, and drink of the wine, which came from the king's table. . . .

"Among the viands [food choices] . . . were swine's flesh and other meats which were declared unclean by the law of Moses, and which the Hebrews had been expressly forbidden to eat. Here Daniel was brought to a severe test. Should he adhere to the teachings of his fathers concerning meats and drinks, and offend the king, probably losing not only his position but his life? or should he disregard the commandment of the Lord, and retain the favor of the king? . . .

"Daniel did not long hesitate. He decided to stand firmly for his integrity, let the result be what it might. . . .

"The character of Daniel is presented to the world as a striking example of what God's grace can make of men fallen by nature and corrupted by sin. The record of his noble, self-denying life is an encouragement to our common humanity. From it we may gather strength to nobly resist temptation, and firmly, and in the grace of meekness, stand for the right under the severest trial."²

REACT

If you are placed in a situation where food/drinks are being served that you know are contrary to what the Bible teaches should be consumed, how should you react? What are some ways to prepare in advance to make such situations less stressful?

1. *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, pp. 27, 28.
2. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 25, 1881.

Gen. 1:26–30;
7:1, 2; 8:20

How-to *Living to Eat or Eating to Live*

Many people understand the principles of nutrition that God has given us. It's in the practical application of those principles where many fall prey to temptation. Here then are six ways to help you change your eating habits so they reflect God's principles:

Pray, sleep, and drink water. Getting enough sleep and drinking enough water prepare our bodies to withstand physical temptations. Time spent in prayer prepares us mentally and spiritually. Read Philippians 4:13. Always keep it in mind.

Be brave! Try something new once or twice a week.

Change habits gradually. If you're changing from a meat-based to a plant-based diet, make the change gradually. "Changes must not be made so abruptly that they will be turned from health reform, instead of being led to it."¹

Plan what and when to eat rather than following your cravings. Make a schedule of what and when you eat. Change that schedule as you learn how your body utilizes food. Experiment with eating only two meals a day, or try eating four to five smaller meals. Learn how fasting can benefit you physically and spiritually.

Journal your eating habits. Note the size of your portions along with the changes you experience in your body and mind, particularly your thoughts. Also note how your prayer life affects your eating habits and how your eating habits affect your prayer life.

Vary your food choices. Eat new and different foods. There are millions of healthy recipes online. Be brave! Try something new once or twice a week. When you first begin to change your eating habits, new foods may not be palatable. Allow time for your tastes to change.

Research Ellen White's guidelines. Go to the E. G. White Estate Web site (<http://www.whiteestate.org>). Then do a key word search of all her writings—for example, "eating habits" or "sugar." Notice how God gently leads us into a deeper, purer relationship with Him. She wrote, "We should not be prevailed upon to take anything into the mouth that will bring the body into an unhealthy condition, no matter how much we like it. Why? Because we are God's property."²

As we seek to become closer to God by purifying our minds and bodies with good, healthful eating habits, He provides us with the strength to succeed.

1. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 284.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

Why Does Good Nutrition Matter?

Gen. 1:26–30;
John 10:10

If you were to ask the title's question of any fitness trainer or nutritionist, you would likely get an enthusiastic response that would take more time than you would care to spend hearing it. If you were to ask that question of a Christian, I believe your response would be similar, but slightly less enthusiastic. However, when we approach the topic of good nutrition, Christians also should be passionate.

"There's no telling where a more abundant life will lead you!"

"Garbage in, garbage out" describes the level of performance your body delivers based on what you fuel it with. Eating a diet rich in candy, simple carbs, fats, and sodas will get you a machine running on empty and unable to perform as God intended. However, load that same body with lean protein, grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables—and watch what happens!

God didn't create our bodies to fail. He created the right sort of fuel to help them function with vitality. Nutrition matters to people who want to be healthy. And nutrition should matter to Christians who want to be healthy. But we may not always act that way. And that's a problem.

If we look at our bodies as finely tuned machines, what would happen if we put the wrong kind of fuel in our tanks? That's precisely why proper nutrition matters to the quality of life we strive for. "You are of infinite value. God calls your body His 'temple.' He wants the very best for you."¹

To be an effective Christian, we have to be running at our best. Living life abundantly is our calling, and eating healthfully helps us to fulfill that calling. "By making a few changes in your diet and lifestyle, you can live on a higher plane in harmony with the laws of your being. With this beginning, there's no telling where a more abundant life will lead you!"²

Just as having a quality relationship with God matters, so it matters if we take care of the bodies He gave us. Approach your next meal with that in mind.

REACT

1. What are some foods that make you feel good? What are some that make you feel bad?
2. How do we dishonor God by failing to pay attention to what we eat?

1. Tim Crosby, "Why Going Meatless Makes Sense," *How to Go Meatless for Life, Vibrant Life* special issue, p. 10.

2. *Ibid.*

Prov. 11:3

Exploration

Right Eating, Abundant Living

CONCLUDE

We see the link between food and abundant life in the Bible's dietary instructions and in Isaiah's and Revelation's preview into heaven's menu. We see practical manifestations—meat eating following the Flood. And we see the spiritual connection—Jesus the “bread of life.” The journey from where we live to eat to where we eat to live more abundantly calls, like any journey, for the three *Ps*—planning, pursuit (action), and patience. Patience with ourselves. And, more so, with those who are not yet as far on the journey to abundant life as we are.

CONSIDER

- Spending 30 to 60 minutes thinking about Bible texts concerning food. Which ones deal with the physical? Which deal with the spiritual? Which cover both?
- Sharing with the class what the *National Geographic* article mentioned in the Connect section implies about how Adventist living leads to abundant life.
- Preparing a three-course or even a one-course meal made entirely of uncooked foods—fruits, vegetables, nuts (if you are not allergic to them), etc. (See the Connect section.)
- Starting a vegetable garden or a mixed flower and vegetable garden.
- Writing a polite letter suggesting what your principal, mayor, premier, governor, president, prime minister, king, or queen can do to improve the food and drinks available in local, regional, or national school(s) and hospital(s).
- Instituting a “Good Food Day” for yourself or family. This could mean no animal products, no snacking, etc. It could last a week, a month, or longer.
- Starting a healthful-food recipe collection.

CONNECT

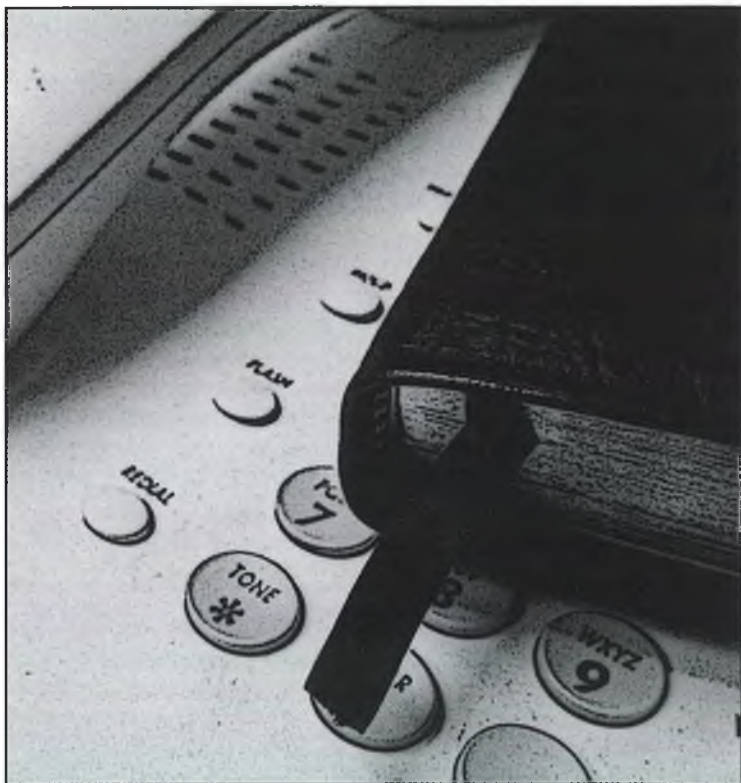
Heal the World: Begin With Yourself (special youth edition of *The Ministry of Healing*), edited by Gary B. Swanson, pp. 97–112; Dan Buettner, “The Secrets of Long Life,” *National Geographic*, November 2005, pp. 2–27; Lu-Ann Bermeo, *Amazing Meals*, vols. 1 and 2; Rose Lee Calabro, *Living in the Raw: Gourmet* (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Company, 2005).

lesson thirteen

JUNE 19-26

Social Support: The Tie That **Binds**

“ ‘I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’ ” (John 13:34, 35, NRSV).



3 John 2

Introduction

*Woman: Wilt Thou Be
Made Whole?*

The night of Sunday, November 30, 1997, was starry and calm. Calmness, however, was not evident behind the closed doors of one home. Mom was sick; she had tried for many days to keep her illness a secret so her children would not worry. Anthony, leaving his other siblings inside with their mother, burst through the front door and ran to a neighbor's house. He knocked on their door and said to the gentleman who answered, "Please, sir, can you help us take our mother to the hospital?"

Ten years later, he sat down to reflect on that night.

Later, Mom was diagnosed with cancer. She was told that even with treatment, she would die within six months. She opted to have no treatment. Anthony was visiting a Seventh-day Adventist Church during this time, so he asked the members there to pray for his mother. It was here that he was introduced to some principles of health.

Ten years later, he sat down to reflect on that night. He had just spoken to his mother on the phone. Then he knelt and prayed, thanking God for His intervention. He had passed on the lessons he learned about nutrition, exercise, water, sunlight, temperance, air, rest, and trust in God to his ailing mother. He encouraged her and helped her to practice them. "God sent manna to Israel, Mom. But it fell outside the camp. They had to go and get it," he would say. "We have to do our part, and God will bless our efforts." God has provided us with numerous laws of health. If we will follow them, we will be protected from much grief.

In 3 John 2, we read, "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" (NIV).

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

We must always seek to share God's love with others and to help them in their time of need. This is the focus of this week's lesson.

* E. M. Lehman and Claudia Lehman Mays, "The Love of God."

Building Lasting Health Through Social Support

Gen. 1:27;
John 1:1–3;
Rom. 14:7;
1 Cor. 12:14–26;
1 Corinthians 13;
Gal. 6:2;
Eph. 4:1–16

The Original Plan (Gen. 1:27; John 1:1–3)

God's original plan for humankind involved that they be dedicated to Him, their loving Creator in whose image they were formed. He also intended for humans to love one another the way He unselfishly loves us. Indeed, the relationship between the Creator and the people He fashioned with His own hands was to be one of continual interaction and reliance, for humankind could not live and be both spiritually and physically healthy apart from Him.

Love transcends all our lofty religious ideals.

The Need for Support (Rom. 14:7; 1 Cor. 12:14)

The interaction between God and humans in the Garden of Eden before the Fall highlights the importance of the relationship not only between God and humans but also between fellow humans. Their health and happiness, manifested in an increased capacity to know and love, is very much dependent on their relationship with the Creator and with one another, this being shown by their loyalty to divine law.¹ Once their relationship with God was severed, there began a decline into suffering and death both spiritually and physically. We were created with an innate capacity and need for loving relationships and companionship. "We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves" (Rom. 14:7, NRSV).

The fact is, we all belong to the body of Christ—the church—and as such, we stand in need of relational support from each member of that body. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul points out that "the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor. 12:14), thus highlighting the collective nature of the family of God. For too long we have failed to live up to our God-given potential. For too long, many have been blinded by their own selfishness and pride, and as a result, many in the body of Christ are sick and destitute.

Restoration Through Supportive Relationships (1 Corinthians 13; Gal. 6:2)

Love was the underpinning of Christ's work in restoring both the spiritual and physical health of the many people with whom He came in contact. Love was the means by which He bound Himself to humanity in an effort to restore the broken relationship that has plunged humanity into death. Love transcends all our lofty religious ideals, and without it we are "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

In the days, weeks, and months of His ministry, Christ laid out for us an

example to follow—an example of untiring service directed toward restoring broken lives, bodies, and minds through His words of cheer and acts of kindness and generosity. As His followers, “in sympathy and compassion we are to minister to those in need of help, seeking with unselfish earnestness to lighten the woes of suffering humanity.”² This work of restoration is one done with Christ and through the love and compassion He has shown to us by His sacrifice on the cross. Paul recognized the importance of this work in His words to the Galatians where He admonishes them to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2, NKJV).

The Action Plan (Eph. 4:1–16)

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul provides the framework we are to use as we work with Christ in restoring health and wellness to those with whom we come in contact. In Ephesians 4:1, 2, he outlines key steps that we should be mindful to follow. First, we must be completely surrendered to Him in order to undertake the work of restoration. Paul actually describes it as being a “prisoner of the Lord” (NKJV), which indicates a complete loss of one’s own powers and self. Once we have surrendered to Christ, the work of restoration must be carried out “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2, 3, NKJV).

All these attributes were shown by Christ as He ministered to people. We also are to exhibit these traits as we meet with and minister to the needs of humanity. As we do, we not only restore relationships but provide the means by which spiritual, emotional, and physical healing can occur.

How Can You Help?

There are many ways we can be of service to those in need, both in the church and in the wider society. We don’t need to engage in expensive efforts or elaborate actions. Christ met the needs of people in humble ways, not for self-service or gratification, but for the glory of God and the restoration of health to those He met. We can work with Christ to provide for the physical needs of individuals, such as food, clothing, and financial support. We can also help them by giving them information they need to cope with the specific challenges they may be facing in their lives, such as drugs and alcohol or unstable family relationships. And we must not forget to give them emotional support by offering expressions of empathy, love, and reassurance.³

REACT

1. Are you completely surrendered to the will of Christ for you life?
2. Do you put yourself in a position to be used by Him in ministering to the needs of others and in restoring His love in the lives of those who are in need?
3. How can you become a worker with Christ?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 51.

2. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 104.

3. Sheldon Cohen, “Social Relationships and Health,” *American Psychologist*, Nov. 2004.

The Open System

Rom. 14:7;
Gal. 6:2

Even in the beginning, we can see that it was not God's intention for us to be alone. We were created as sociable beings, meant to interact with our surroundings and with other individuals. We are to live in ways that foster meaningful relationships with others; not only for health purposes, but also because through such relationships we can witness more effectively for Jesus.

We can only do so much by ourselves.

"It is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world. Every man or woman who has tasted of the love of Christ and has received into the heart the divine illumination, is required of God to shed light on the dark pathway of those who are unacquainted with the better way."¹

As Christ has shared His love with us, we also are to share with everyone we meet. It is usually after establishing a relationship with an individual that we get to understand that person's needs. By ministering to a person's immediate needs, we are doing exactly what Christ did when He walked here on earth. We are also opening space in a person's heart to hear what the Savior requires.

"Christian sociability is altogether too little cultivated by God's people. . . . By social intercourse acquaintances are formed and friendships contracted which result in a unity of heart and an atmosphere of love which is pleasing in the sight of heaven.

"Everyone will find companions or make them. And just in proportion to the strength of the friendship, will be the amount of influence which friends will exert over one another for good or for evil. All will have associates, and will influence and be influenced in their turn. . . .

"The warmth of true friendship . . . is a foretaste of the joys of heaven."²

The Bible likens God's family of believers to a body in which each member carries out a specific function, and even though these functions are diverse, each one is equally important and works to complement all the others. We need each other in order to function properly (1 Cor. 12:14–26). We can do only so much by ourselves; but by working together, we can multiply and carry out our efforts with increased efficiency.

REACT

Discuss the importance of working together to reach others and the effect that uncooperative individuals can have on the process.

1. *Counsels on Health*, p. 391.

2. *My Life Today*, p. 204.

Gen. 2:18

Evidence

Interpersonal Relationships and Physical Well-Being

According to the World Health Organization, “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”¹ When talking about health, the focus is most often placed on biological concerns, even though interpersonal relationships have a huge impact

Healthy interpersonal relationships improve physical health and well-being.

on one’s health. After all, we are social beings, and social beings need to interact with each other to maintain internal balance. When there is an imbalance in the body, illness normally occurs. In Genesis 2:18, the Lord said it was not good for Adam to be alone. Thus, He created Eve, someone with whom Adam could have a close relationship. “An interpersonal relationship is a relatively long-term association between two or more people. This association may be based on emotions like love and liking, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment. Interpersonal relationships take place in a great variety of contexts, such as family, friends, marriage, acquaintances, work, clubs, neighborhoods, and churches. They may be regulated by law, custom, or mutual agreement, and are the basis of social groups and society as a whole.”²

Healthy interpersonal relationships improve physical health and well-being. “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Prov. 17:22, NKJV). Healthy interpersonal relationships bring about happiness and laughter, which promote physical well-being. However, unhealthy relationships will cause a broken heart, which can lead to ill health. Unhappiness weakens the immune system, which predisposes the body to sickness.

As obedient children of God, we are to first practice good health and then teach it. By so doing, we can lead others to Him.

REACT

1. Take a few minutes to imagine what perfect health will be like in heaven.
2. Find another text in the Bible that supports healthy interpersonal relationships.

1. World Health Organization, “WHO Definition of Health,” <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html> (retrieved December 23, 2008).

2. “Interpersonal Relationships,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpersonal_relationship (accessed May 14, 1009).

How-to Creating Healthy Relationships

Col. 3:13

In the beginning, God created people to love one another. However, when sin entered His perfect world as a result of disobedience, human relationships began to suffer. How can we have healthier relationships now? Following are seven ways:

Live the Ten Commandments. Read Exodus 20:1–17. The first four commandments concern our relationship with God. The rest concern our relationship with others. Living according to all of these commands will help us to have healthier relationships.

Holding grudges can also make us physically ill.

Study God's Word and pray. Read Psalm 119:15, 16. Spending quality time with God strengthens and renews the mind and spirit and gives us insight into how we should treat one another. As we study and pray, we are transformed into His likeness. His likeness is described by the fruit of the Spirit. Read Galatians 5:22, 23. Each one of these fruit assists in the growth of healthy relationships.

Acknowledge your faults before God and repent. Read Proverbs 28:13. Admitting our faults and repenting helps us to understand that we are not perfect. This realization can help us to be more sympathetic toward others when they do something that hurts us.

Practice God's laws for physical health. Read 3 John 2. When we feel well physically, it is easier to get along with others.

Talk less. Listen more. The Greek philosopher Epictetus wrote, "Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak."*

Avoid gossip. Read what Proverbs has to say about this relationship killer in Proverbs 11:13; 16:27; 18:8; 19:9; and 26:20.

Be forgiving. Read the Bible's advice regarding this in Matthew 5:39–45; 18:21, 22; Ephesians 4:32; and Colossians 3:13. It's hard to have a good relationship with someone we can't forgive. Holding grudges can also make us physically ill.

Our emotions are linked to our physical health. There is a notable difference in someone who feels loved. We often hear stories of how people who are ill are revived just by hearing the voice of a loved one. As we walk this Christian pathway, we need family and friends of like faith to revive us when we fall and to keep us grounded in God's love and healing power.

*Quotations Book, <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/24012/> (accessed February 20, 2009).

Gen. 1:27

Opinion

In the Image of God

We all have photographs of loved ones on our bookcases, refrigerators, or dressers. These photographs symbolize relationships; and when we look at them, we remember when the picture was taken or something special about the people in them. Even though they are not physically present, we feel connected to them just by looking at their image. We are created in God's image, so we know that we are meant to have a relationship with Him. Because we are created in His image, He wants to see His image reflected in us.

Whenever God creates something, He always locates it somewhere.

Whenever God creates something, He always locates it somewhere. Genesis 1 illustrates that everything He created had a home. The moon and stars had the firmament; animals had the land; and the fish had the sea. Genesis 2:8 states that God planted a garden in Eden, "and there he put the man whom he had formed." Our original parents were able to exist in the very presence of God.

Just as thousands of miles, and sometimes even prison and death, can separate us from the people in our photographs, so this sinful world attempts to separate us from God and from carrying out His purpose for us. Today through TV, music, video games, and other worldly influences, Satan is persistently spreading lies about God, which separate people from Him.

However, like a good interior designer, He knows the best place to put His images so that all will be drawn to Him. He gives us the necessary tools to do this in His Word: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength'" (Deut. 6:5, NKJV). He reminds us that He will be with us always "even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17, NRSV). The way God originally located Adam and Eve in His very presence is the same way He promises that where He is "there you may be also" (John 14:3, NKJV), that is, in heaven.

REACT

1. What hope can we receive from knowing that we are created in the image of God for a divine purpose—even if we don't always know what the purpose is?
2. How does your behavior reflect God's image? How does it not?

No Man Is an Island

John 13:34, 35

CONCLUDE

God often provides miracles of healing through His health laws. As members of the “body of Christ,” we are responsible not just for ourselves but for reaching out whenever we see damaged health or relationships. God’s power for transformation is best shared in the context of a supportive community. This is one of the necessary conditions for complete health. It begins with a saving relationship with our Savior and ends with His image reflected in our relationships.

CONSIDER

- Reaching out to neighbors with a homemade treat or a basket of fresh fruit. Ask what’s going on in their lives, and how you can pray for—and/or with—them.
- Acting out an imaginary conversation between Adam and God about why it wasn’t good for Adam to be alone.
- Making a diagram of the “body of Christ.” Draw the silhouette of a person on a large piece of paper. Label the head as Jesus. Imagine yourself and the members of your church or family as other body parts, and draw them in.
- Singing “We Are the Body of Christ,” by Scott Wesley Brown and David Hampton. Write a new verse or two if you wish.
- Writing several favorite phrases from this week’s lesson on sticky notes and placing them on your mirror.
- Researching a specific illness or condition, focusing on how other body parts and organs contribute to its healing.
- Joining (or starting!) a small-group Bible study in your church or neighborhood.

CONNECT

Peter Walters and John Byl, eds., *Christian Paths to Health and Wellness* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Publishers, 2007); Carol Lawson, *Embracing Relationships: Hook Ups, Earthly and Heavenly* (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation Publishers, 2006); Dick Tibbits, *Forgive to Live* devotional (Orlando, Fla.: Florida Hospital Publishing, 2007); Timothy Aryal, *Interpersonal Relationships: Why and How?* (Oklahoma City, Okla.: Tate Publishing, 2008); David White and Christy Yingling, *Prime Time Living* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 2005).

Redemption in Romans

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for third quarter 2010, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1 Paul and Rome

Logos: Acts 28:17–31; Rom. 1:7; 15:14, 20–27; Ephesians 1; Phil. 1:12

Memory Text: “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8, NKJV).

Ideally, in our study of the book of Romans, after a study of the historical background, we should begin with Romans 1:1 and then go through the entire book verse by verse. Because only one quarter has been allotted to the study of the book, we have had to be selective in what parts we can study. The book could easily take four quarters, not one, to explore. Hence, only the key chapters, in which the basic message is contained, will be covered.

It is extremely important that a student of the book of Romans understand the book's historical background. Without that background, it will be difficult for the student to know what Paul is saying. Paul was writing to a specific group of Christians at a specific time for a specific reason; knowing, as much as possible, that reason will greatly benefit us in our study.

We must, in our imagination, go back in time, transport ourselves to Rome, become members of the congregation there, and then, as first-century church members, listen to Paul and the words that the Holy Spirit gave him at that time.

Amazingly enough, though written a long time ago and in a whole other context, the book has messages relevant to His people today, in every land and in most every situation. Hence, we need to heed prayerfully the words written here and apply them to our lives.

Lesson 2 Jew and Gentile

Logos: Leviticus 23; Matt. 19:17; Acts 15:1–29; Gal. 1:1–12; Heb. 8:6; Rev. 12:17

Memory Text: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

The first converts to Christianity were all Jews, and the New Testament gives no indication that they were asked to drop the practice of circumcision or to ignore

the Jewish festivals. But when the Gentiles began to accept Christianity, important questions arose. Should the Gentiles submit to circumcision? To what extent should they keep other Jewish laws? Finally, a council was called at Jerusalem to settle the matter (see Acts 15).

Despite a firm decision by the council not to trouble the Gentiles with a host of regulations and laws, some teachers continued to plague the churches by insisting that Gentile converts to the faith were required to keep these rules and laws, including circumcision.

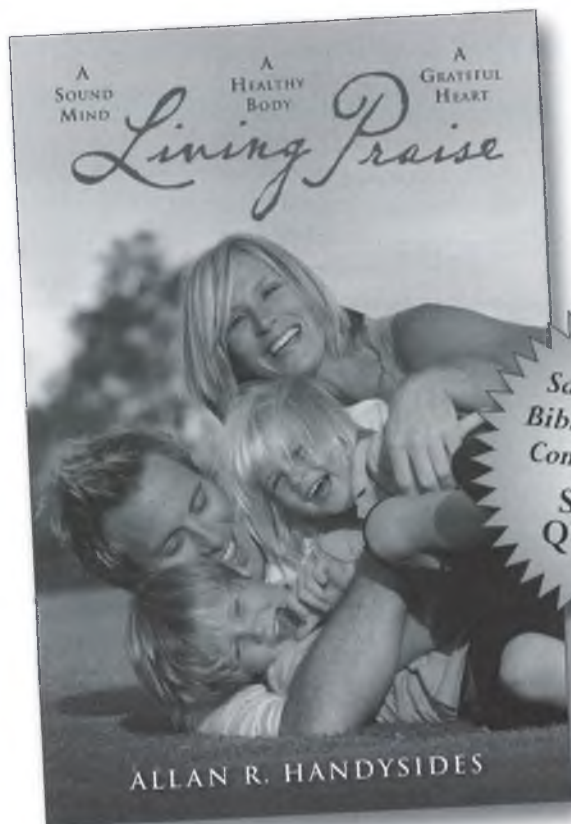
In some ways, these issues exist today, only in a different form. How often are we, as Adventists, accused of being Judaizers, or legalists, because of our adherence to the Ten Commandments (or, in actuality, our adherence to the Sabbath commandment)? How often do we hear that we are now under the New Covenant, and so the law (the Sabbath commandment) has been done away with?

On the other side, at times as a church we are confronted with those who would like to impose more Old Testament rules and regulations on us, as well.

Hence, Romans certainly has an important message for us today, as it did for the Roman church back then.

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The Roma, or Gypsy people, are a tight-knit ethnic group living in communities throughout Europe and elsewhere. And they are opening up to the gospel. Fifteen years ago only a handful of Roma Adventists lived in one city in Bulgaria. Following evangelistic meetings, the church grew rapidly. Word spread through family groups, and today 1,000 Roma in this city are Seventh-day Adventists. So many visitors attend some Sabbath services that the members are asked to stay away to make room for guests.

In the town of Montana in northwestern Bulgaria, another Roma congregation has organized following evangelistic meetings. The 30 members and at least that many visitors meet in a rundown café. The lay pastor visits the people in their homes to build trust. He leads a study group for youth, none of whom are yet members.

This congregation needs a decent place to worship, a place to bring their friends to Jesus. I want to help them learn that Jesus died for them. I'm glad that part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will provide a church for this growing Roma congregation. For me it's personal.

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