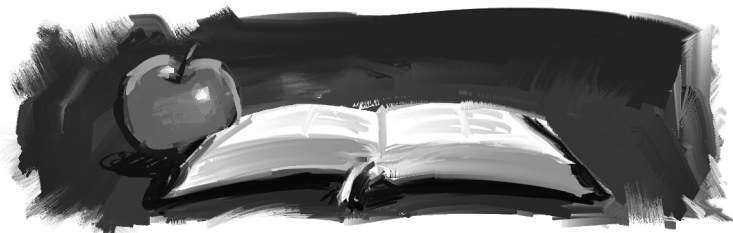


The Bible *and* Health



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 4:23; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 6:4, 9-11; Phil. 4:4-9; Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8-10.*

Memory Text: “I am the Lord, who heals you” (*Exodus 15:26, NIV*).

Key Thought: The Word of God gives us good reasons to take care of our health.

The Bible endorses the value of the physical body; after all, it was created by God. The believer should, therefore, seek to understand and intentionally put into practice measures that enhance health. Care for one's health is a moral matter, evidence of loyalty and responsible service to God. At the practical level the condition of one's health largely determines whether a person can carry out effective service for the Lord or for anyone they feel called to serve.

Although the foundational goals and values of health from a biblical perspective are conveyed through God's Word, the exact means of achieving these goals has come largely from medical science, which often validates many of the principles of health found in the Bible.

It is incumbent on all Christians to do what they can to take care of their health. Health-building activities, including exercise, wholesome diet, proper systematic rest, practical satisfying work, avoidance of damaging substances or practices, good habits of cleanliness, cultivated efforts to live in peace with and help others, and a profound trust in God make the best possible use of the life God has given us. Our bodies are sacred gifts to us from God; we have the responsibility to take care of them the best we know how.

This week let's take a look at what the Bible says about health and the principles found in its pages.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 2.*

To Be in Health

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

We tend to think of the Bible as dealing only with the spiritual side, yet, that’s not the case. Scripture shows that God cares also about our physical being and that our spiritual side is linked with the physical. We can find in the Bible good reasons for taking care of our health.

Look up the following texts and write out what reasons you can find in them that would call us to take care of our health:

Rom. 12:1

Rom. 14:7

1 Cor. 3:16, 17

1 Cor. 6:19, 20

Eph. 5:29

3 John 2

Scripture makes it clear that God does care about health, our physical well-being. That makes sense, of course. After all, what loving parent doesn’t care about the health, mental and physical, of their child? How much more so would the Lord care about ours?

It’s been said that we never care about our health until we lose it. If healthy, do you take your health for granted? Talk to someone struggling with health problems. More than likely, you’ll better understand why our health should be carefully guarded.

Health and Restoration

In the beginning God, our Creator, created us healthy, without sickness and disease. The plan of salvation is God's divine way to bring us back to what we originally lost. He wants to restore us to what we once had.

Read Romans 6:4; 9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Colossians 1:20, 21; 3:8-10; 1 John 3:2. What essential message is given to us from these texts? What hope do they offer?

Healing and restoration often are talked about in the Bible. God's promises to restore Israel spill forth in language filled with healing and curative terms (*Jer. 30:12-17, 33:6, Ezek. 47:12, Mal. 4:2*). So clear is the affinity in the New Testament that one of its principal words for healing (*soteria*) may be translated as either "healing" or "salvation." Salvation, then, may include not only rescue from sin and its consequences but also restoration, healing of the whole person.

All biblical teachings are predicated on the basis that, in the end, what was lost when sin entered will be restored when the One who created becomes the One who restores His creation. Having healed our wounds and borne our transgressions at Calvary, He appears at last in the book of Revelation as Christus Victor, in triumph over Satan and the forces of evil (*Rev. 20:14, 21:8*). Those who love and serve God will be restored to the perfect condition that once was; all that is evil, meanwhile, will be destroyed, never to rise again. In both Old Testament and New Testament prophecies this new earth is foreseen as free from sickness, pain, and death (*Isa. 33:24, Rev. 21:4*). The apostle Paul rejoices in Christ's resurrection as proof that He is Victor over all evil forces. Christ's victory has become ours (*1 Thess. 4:14-17*).

As Adventists we have been given precious light on health and health principles, all designed to give us a lifestyle that will prevent disease. How seriously do you follow these principles? How well do you even know them? Why wait until you get sick to start following principles that could help prevent sickness to begin with?

Jesus, the Great Healer

We often hear of Jesus as the Great Physician. And no wonder. Roughly calculated, approximately 20 percent of the Gospels is dedicated to His restoring sick people to health. Although in some cases duplication occurs, the four Gospels report 35 specific instances, alongside the general reports.

How central was healing to Jesus' earthly ministry? (*Matt. 4:23, Luke 6:7-19, 9:11*).

Through the miraculous healings Jesus gave great evidence regarding His role as the Savior. But He did so much more, as well. As humans, we have been damaged spiritually, emotionally, and physically by sin. The whole plan of salvation centers on *restoring* to us what we had once lost. In the beginning there was no sickness and no death; in the end there won't be either (*see Rev. 21:4*). By healing, Jesus was showing the world the power of God to bring about restoration, to bring about what was lost by sin. The healings weren't an end in themselves; they were all to point to something greater: salvation in Jesus.

Read Luke 4:16-21. What do these texts reveal to us about the purpose and ministry of Jesus?

Jesus' primary task was to proclaim that God is receiving His sinful, suffering creatures in a sweeping act of grace and love. His actions were evidence of final deliverance from a world of sin. He had come to deliver, to seek and to save, to forgive, to proclaim the day of God's mercy, to confer life everlasting, and to be the Restorer of all that was lost. He was first of all the Savior, and physical healings were evidences of His authority.

Whatever our illness, whatever our sicknesses, we have wonderful promises in the Bible of healing and restoration; that is, complete healing and complete restoration. Dwell on this, our greatest hope. Pray for more faith to believe in those promises. If you know someone struggling with sickness, point that person to this hope.

Moderation in All Things

Read Philippians 4:4-9. What practical principles can you find in these texts that can have a positive impact on our physical well-being?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:25, Galatians 5:23, and Titus 1:8, 2:2. What practical admonitions are found in these texts that can have a definite bearing on our physical health?

The Greek word used in many of these verses for “temperate” comes from a word often used in the context of athletic training, of an athlete who, in preparation for an event such as a race, takes special care to abstain from that which can hurt his or her body. How much more so should this principle apply to us as Christians in the race that we are running (*1 Cor. 9:24-27, Heb. 12:1*)?

We all know about health problems that can come from the use of liquor, illegal drugs, and so forth. Those are the obvious ones. Yet, so often bad health comes by overindulging in the gifts that God has given us to enjoy. Contrary to popular caricatures of biblical religion, it’s not sinful to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. God made us to enjoy these things, but only in their proper sphere, and in moderation and with temperance, as so clearly shown in the Bible.

“True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use judiciously that which is healthful. There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 398. How much sense Ellen White’s words make! Examine yourself. How moderate and temperate are you, even with that which is good? What changes might you need to make?

Healthy Relationships

Again and again the Bible speaks about the need of loving one another. Jesus said that it is the greatest of all commandments (*Matt. 22:37-40*). When Paul speaks about Christian virtues, such as faith, hope, and love, he says that the greatest is love (*1 Cor. 13:13, NIV*). No wonder Jesus said that one significant characteristic of His followers is that they love one another (*John 13:35*).

How do the following texts characterize Christian love?

1 Cor. 13:4-7

1 John 4:7

1 John 4:18

Study after study shows how family love—a close loving relationship between parents and children—can stem a tide of evils in young people, evils that can bear terrible fruit in adulthood.

As God's people we need to love one another (*1 Thess. 3:2*), serve one another (*Gal. 5:13*), bear with one another (*Eph. 4:2*), be kind to one another (*Eph. 4:32*), admonish one another (*Rom. 15:14*), be tender-hearted and forgiving to one another (*Eph. 4:32*), comfort one another (*1 Thess. 4:18*), show compassion to one another (*1 Pet. 3:8*), be hospitable to one another (*1 Pet. 4:9*), and pray for one another (*James 5:16*). These commands, so clearly outlined in the Word, will help us to be connected with one another as God's people and will strengthen family relationships, which ultimately protect our youth from high-risk behavior. Through forming close bonds and thus giving and receiving love and care and concern, we can have such a positive moral, spiritual, and physical influence on one another. The Scriptures are so right in showing how important good relationships are for us, not just spiritually but physically, as well.

Review some of your most basic relationships. From your end, what motivates these relationships: self-serving or self-giving, greed or love, a desire for personal gain or a desire to be a blessing? Think about the good you have done for others. Were the principles elucidated in today's lesson the motivating force behind your relationships?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Use of Remedies,” pp. 234–240; “Diet and Health,” pp. 295–310 in *The Ministry of Healing*; “The Health Reform,” pp. 271–296 in *Selected Messages*, book 3.

“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. . . .

“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.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 344.

“Many of those who came to Christ for help had brought disease upon themselves, yet He did not refuse to heal them. And when virtue from Him entered into these souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease as well as of their physical maladies.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 73.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Jesus’ healing ministry formed a crucial component of His work of leading people to salvation. How can your local church better use the light we have on health and healing as part of its outreach to the world?
- ❷ As a class, talk about what the Bible says about such things as diet, use of alcohol, rest, and so forth. What health principles on these topics do you find in the Bible? To the best of your knowledge, how has modern science validated these principles? How have members personally benefited from following what the Bible has to say on these things?
- ❸ As a class, take time to visit any members who are sick or hurting. Bring Bible promises to share with them. At the same time, in what practical ways can you minister to them and help relieve their sufferings?

The Pot-and-Pan Evangelist

by JOTA WASHINGTON F. ALVES

Geraldina Alves works in a small factory that makes household goods in eastern Brazil. She is a faithful Seventh-day Adventist who loves the Lord and wants to share her faith with others. But she wasn't sure how she could reach people outside her circle of friends. Then God showed her one way that was, quite literally, right under her nose.

"God inspired me to put a tract inside each pot or pan, each plate or cup we sell," she said. "We send out up to four thousand items a day; I could share that many tracts each day."

Geraldina spoke to the factory's owner, who gave her permission to include the tracts. She began inserting a tract on top of each pot, so it would be the first thing the new owners would see when they opened the box. Often during the day as Geraldina placed the tracts into the boxes, she prayed for the people who would find them. She doubted that she ever would know the outcome of her missionary adventure, but she was happy to do what she could for God.

In another city, Maria da Silva suffered from depression. Her life felt dark, and she could see little hope for her future. Then her husband bought her a pressure cooker from Geraldina's factory. As Maria opened the box, a colorful tract fell out. Picking it up, she looked at it.

As Maria read the tract, a glimmer of hope flickered across her heart. "God loves me?" she said to herself, trying to capture the truth of the statement. She forgot her new pan as she read the tract carefully. She found an address on the back where she could write for more information and to request Bible studies.

Maybe there is hope for me, she thought. She wrote to the address on the tract, and a few weeks later, she received her first Bible study lessons. Maria showed them to her family, and together they began studying God's Word in depth. In time the entire family was baptized together.

A few months later Geraldina Alves, the "pot evangelist" met Maria da Silva and her family on Adventist television's *Novo Tempo*. "Even though you did not know me, you and your tract saved my life," Maria told Geraldina.

Mission takes many forms. Sometimes it's a sacrificial offering or a caring visit with someone who needs to hear of God's love. And other times it's a tract in a pot.

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