

Contents

Health and Healing

1. Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow! (March 27–April 2)	4
2. The Power of Choice (April 3–9).	11
3. The Joys of Exercise (April 10–16)	19
4. The Water of Life (April 17–23).	26
5. The Environment (April 24–30).	34
6. Faith and Healing (May 1–7).	41
7. Rest and Renewal (May 8–14)	49
8. The Atmosphere of Praise (May 15–21)	56
9. Healthful Lifestyle (May 22–28)	63
10. Integrity: Being Whole and Holy (May 29–June 4)	70
11. The Power of Positive Thinking: Happiness and Healing (June 5–11)	77
12. What the Bible Says About Eating Good Food (June 12–18).	83
13. Social Support: The Tie That Binds Us to One Another (June 19–25).	90

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Introduction

“The Saving of Our Bodies”

“ ‘I am the Lord your God. Listen carefully to my voice. Do what is right in my eyes. Pay attention to my commands. Obey all of my rules. If you do, I will not send on you any of the sicknesses I sent on the Egyptians. I am the Lord who heals you’ ” (Exodus 15:26, NIV).

God promised the people of Israel they would be protected from Egypt’s diseases soon after they left Egypt. But this promise was not dependent only on God’s actions. Instead it depended on the natural laws of health. Suppose the people followed what the Lord commanded that they do in the area of health and in keeping themselves clean. Then they would not get the diseases that bothered the Egyptians. For example, the Egyptians used human urine and bowel stools as medicine while the Hebrews buried theirs outside the camp.

Even here, then, we notice God cared about the health of His people’s spirits and bodies. This idea also is found in the Hebrew word *shalom*. This word means “peace.” But it also suggests a person’s total health, both body and mind. The word *shalom* in the Old Testament is first used when Jacob asks about Laban, the grandson of Abraham’s brother. Jacob asks, “And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well” (Genesis 29:6, KJV). In both examples, the word translated “well” comes from *shalom*. Of course, it makes perfect sense that God would care about the health of our bodies. After all, He created us as humans (men, women, and children) with bodies. Before sin, before the Fall, we were already in the flesh. We were made as humans. Our fall was not to the flesh. It was a fall in the flesh. Our bodies are not evil or bad. They are not the prison houses for the soul (as some religions have taught). Our bodies are wonderful gifts from a loving God who created us in His image (likeness). God also wants us to enjoy our lives as much as possible in this fallen world.

Thus, this quarter we are going to study an often-forgotten part of the wonderful truths God has given us. This is the health message. The Lord gave principles (rules) to us for the same reason He died for us. He did this because He loves us and wants what is best for us.

Of course, we will all die some day if Christ does not come in our lifetime. We all face sickness too. Nothing is going to change that now. Neither does healthful living. But that does not mean we should not do our best to take care of ourselves. That does not mean we should not do our duty to God by taking good

care of our body temples. As Paul said it: “Don’t [Do not] you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is in you. You have received him [the Spirit] from God. You do not belong to yourselves. Christ has paid the price for you. So use your bodies in a way that honors God” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NIV).

This quarter’s lesson on healthful living was written by the General Conference Health Ministries¹ Department in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. The department wants to help us enjoy as much *shalom* (peace) as we can have until the last day when God comes and “[raises] our bodies and [gives] glory² to them” (Romans 8:23, NIV).

Authors from the Health Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists were Allan Handysides, Kathleen Kuntaraf, Peter Landless, Stoy Proctor, and the late Thomas Zirkle who died in 2008.

1. ministries—the many types of work people do for God.

2. glory—great beauty, power, and royal perfection.