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God's Perspectives on Health

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God's Perspectives on Health

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God is love. Everything about Him expresses His deep love and interest in us. He cares intimately about every aspect of our lives, even our health. This loving and caring interest is eloquently expressed by the apostle John: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”

(1)

To many this may come as a surprise—God considers our physical health just as important as our spiritual health! Many have the impression that God is concerned only with the salvation of the soul, but this is a distortion. His interest involves every aspect of our being.

As Creator, God knows exactly what it takes to keep the human body in excellent health, and because health depends so much on our life-style, God is intimately concerned about how we live. No wonder, then, that the Bible gives so much sound instruction on how to maintain our health. As we study God's Word, we come to realize that many of the current practices of preventive medicine come straight from Him— medicine is finally catching up with the counsels of Scripture. Let us take another look at what the Bible says.

God's Plan at Creation

Created in the Image of God

When God created the human race He made them like Himself, creating male and female “in His own image,” (2) with perfect health. They were able to interact harmoniously with their Creator as well as each other. There was a perfect balance between

physical, mental, and spiritual faculties. Each person revealed a “wholeness” or completeness, full of vitality, possessing superb health and peaceful happiness.

God’s Plan to Maintain Perfect Health

God intended that humans would remain in perfect health— forever. He therefore gave detailed instructions on how to live and to maintain their physical mental, and spiritual health.

Physical Health

God’s loving concern for human even specified what would truly be best to eat. He said, “I have given 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.” (3) Here He provided the ideal of human nutrition. It consisted of a diet without flesh, the type of vegetarian diet promoted by many in the medical community today as a nutritious, low-fat, high complex-carbohydrate diet.

God also provided healthful occupation. He gave them outdoor exercise, which involved useful physical labor to keep their bodies active. Thus He prepared a garden and assigned Adam and Eve to maintain it. (4)

Mental Health

For optimal mental health God gave the first couple special assignments. First, He gave them the responsibility of stewardship over all living creatures. (5) How fulfilling to be given stewardship over this new creation!

Then God made them caretakers of the garden He planted for them, thus giving their minds the opportunity to be occupied with wholesome creative activity. With the exercise came the satisfaction of beauty and the delights of taste. Productiveness brings a sense of worth and value.

Spiritual Health

In the beginning God communicated with His creation intimately, face to-face. Nothing hindered the relationship. God shared His love and spoke personally with Adam and Eve to

nurture their spiritual health, and communicated specific instructions on how they should live.

Upon examining the result of His creation He concluded that it was “very good.” (6) It was God’s intention that the longer His children lived the more fully they would reveal His image.

Need for a Life-style of Obedience

This perfect health and freedom from death, as enjoyed at creation, was based on faithfulness to God’s implicit instructions. To test Adam’s and Eve’s loyalty and love, God decided to restrict their freedom in one area; He forbade them to eat the fruit from only one fruit tree on the whole earth. Obedience to this command would assure everlasting life; disobedience would result in a certain death. (7)

The Fall

Not long after their creation, Adam and Eve were faced with the temptation to eat from this tree, from none other than the Devil or Satan. (8) The enticement focused on the area of appetite. As Eve approached the forbidden tree she began to dwell upon its attractive fruit. Soon it seemed “good for food” and “pleasant to the eyes.” (9) At last, as she continued contemplating the beautiful fruit and the artful insinuations of the “serpent,” her appetite became so overwhelming that she gave in and ate the forbidden fruit. She persuaded her partner to eat also. They went contrary to what God specifically said and thus they sinned.

The consequences of this action were enormous. They lost their dominion over the earth, forfeiting it to the Devil, “the ruler of this world.” (10)

Separating them from God, the source of eternal life, and the tree of life, this one sin brought guilt and sorrow upon the world. Physical decay, deformity, sickness, and death became the lot of the race. It became more and more difficult for human nature, weakened by sin, to resist the temptations that have penetrated into every realm of life. Finally, the power of the appetite and passions

has gained almost unlimited control, causing widespread disease and deterioration of the human race. We tend to lust after what tastes good, feels good, and appears good, regardless of what is truly best.

The impact of sin on the image of God in humanity is overwhelming. By now this image is nearly destroyed, with weakened physical powers and mental capacity, as well as diminished spiritual vision. Disease, pain, and suffering are part of the Devil's plan to totally destroy the human race.

God's Plan for Re-creation

But God still loves the human race, blemished as we are. He longs to bring us back to our original vitality and wholeness. Because of that love, Christ came to redeem the human race, to rescue humans and restore them to the image of God. The Bible states it profoundly: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (11) Jesus came to a lost world with His gift of new, invigorating, transforming life. In Him, God offers total restoration to health!

When Christ came He promised the abundant life. (12) To demonstrate His unique mission to restore body, mind, and spirit, He focused His ministry specifically on healing, teaching, and preaching. (13) In doing this He fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy about the coming Messiah who was to take "our infirmities" and "our sicknesses." (14)

Truly, He came to remove the burden of disease and sin, to bring the human family health and perfection of character. As one writer put it so clearly, it was the mission of Christ "to restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption." (15)

Importance of Health to Restoration

The health of the human body is essential in reaching God's goal for the restoration of the race. God solicits human cooperation. To accomplish this goal, He employs the following motivational Biblical concepts:

The Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

To highlight the special importance of body health, the Bible reveals that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit— His very own home. We have no right to do what we please with ourselves, because we are bought with Christ's own life on Calvary. His death paid the ransom necessary to release us from the devil's captivity. The body, therefore, belongs to Christ (16) and we have the responsibility and privilege of doing everything possible to keep it in optimal health.

The Body is to Glorify God

Yes, the ransom Christ paid to liberate humanity brings us under the moral obligation to glorify God with our bodies. It means that human beings have the opportunity to be restored into God's image and reflect God's character. This has far-reaching implications for our life-style. The Bible states that "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (17) As soon as one realizes this, life's activities cease to be meaningless. From personal experience Paul exclaimed, "For to me, to live is Christ." (18)

Everything we do physically, mentally, or spiritually, will be done in reference to whether or not it honors the Savior. We will eat the most nutritious foods, get adequate exercise, proper rest, sunshine, and plenty of water, as well as refrain from using unclean foods, intoxicating drinks, tobacco, and other harmful substances and practices.

The Body is a Living Sacrifice

In Old Testament times, believers were required to present animal sacrifices as evidence of their total dedication and commitment to God. We are now called to present your "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (19) What are the implications? We no longer live to our

desires but to His glory. A far-reaching commitment is called for: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (20) A self-centered life-style that indulges in health-destroying practices is incompatible with God’s plan for the life of a Christian.

The Body is to Function in Harmony with God’s Law

God’s plan is to bring us into harmony with His eternal law, the Ten Commandments. The sixth commandment prohibits killing. (21) In the broadest sense this does not mean just to refrain from killing others, but also prohibits killing oneself. In positive terms, it means to do everything possible to keep the human body as healthy as possible. It implies abstinence from everything injurious to healthful living. We need to obey all God’s laws, which include natural laws.

Normally, when Christians speak about living in harmony with God’s laws, they think only about the claims of the moral law of the Ten Commandments. However, God is not only the Creator of that moral law but He is also the Author of all natural law. The laws of nature include the laws responsible for the proper operation of the human body. They pertain to all the laws of health. Violation of the natural laws of the human organism is a transgression of divine law and is considered a sin because it goes against God’s plan of restoration.

The Body is to be Prepared for the Second Advent

Very soon Jesus will return to take us to heaven (22) where there will be no pain or sorrow (23). Those who have accepted Jesus’ offer of restoration and have implemented His instructions on how to live will joyfully greet Him when He returns. (24)

The Bible does not call us merely to a spiritual preparation for Christ’s return, as indispensable as this is. This preparation involves the whole person. Paul stated: “May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (25)

We have seen that God’s interest in individuals involves the

physical, mental, and spiritual health. Followers of Jesus will refrain from a life-style that does not prepare them to meet Him soon.

The Body is to Attain to Christian Excellence

The Bible calls upon people to attain to Christian perfection. Accordingly, Paul stated, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (26) Those who have in their life-style anything that defiles will be barred from the eternal inheritance. (27) The lifestyle that leads toward Bible perfection involves full compliance with the laws of health, and abstinence from everything unhealthful. (28)

The Bible exhorts believers to live a life-style of sanctification. This means doing everything they can to take care of their physical, mental, and spiritual health. It means exercising self-control over the passions and health-destroying inclinations so they do not dominate the body. It is through Christ’s power alone that we are able to bring these drives into subjection and receive the imperishable crown.” (29, 30, 31, 32)

The Secret of Healthful Living

Christ’s promise of the abundant life is not an unrealistic ideal that cannot be reached. The Bible assures believers that when they give their lives to Him, Christ will enable them to follow His directives for the abundant, healthful life. He promises that “he who abides in Me, and I in Him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.” “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (33)

This special relationship the Bible calls the “new covenant,” which God is wanting to establish with His people. When we have entered into this closest of relationships, God’s call to a new and healthy life-style is welcomed and obeyed from our hearts. When Christ possesses our minds we delight to do His will. Instead of being a burden, healthful living becomes a joy—just the way we

want to do it, anyway. We do not wish to live any other way because we love the healthy way, and worship and adore its Author.

The Ultimate Goal Reforming Our Health Habits

One of the most comprehensive descriptions of the object of healthful living comes from the pen of Ellen White, a prolific writer on the subject of health. She said that the great object of health is “to secure the highest possible development of mind and soul and body. All the laws of nature—which are the laws of God—are designed for our good. Obedience to them will promote our happiness in this life, and will aid us in a preparation for the life to come.” (34)

Implementing these Biblical counsels enables us to experience Jesus’ magnificent promise: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (35) So, live!

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9. Genesis 3:6
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34. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 23
35. John 10:10

*All texts in the article are from the NKJV unless otherwise indicated.