

The Sure Word Bible Studies ***Lesson 14***

A Healthy Mind

Today there is a lot of emphasis placed on health. And it seems that whenever this topic comes up there is usually a lot of counsel about lifestyle and diet. Some religious people seem to think that even our salvation depends on what we eat! At the same time others scoff at the idea that we should be particular about diet or any other lifestyle issue. In their view, these kinds of things have nothing to do with the spiritual aspect of our lives. To help us find the balance to this issue we must turn to the Bible.

I Corinthians 6:12 *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."*

This goes back to cause and effect, which includes both physical as well as spiritual laws and principles.

Galatians 6:7 - 8 *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."*

God does not punish those who follow poor health practices, but they suffer the natural consequences of violating the principles of good health. For example, if a man smokes two packs of cigarettes a day for 40 years and develops lung cancer, God is not punishing him by giving him cancer. His lung cancer is simply the result of all those years of smoking.

At the same time, regardless of how healthy a lifestyle a person may live, it is a fact that some will not live out their normal life expectancy. Accidents and unavoidable diseases can strike those who are in the best of health and cut their lives short. But there is a more meaningful reason for doing our best to be healthy other than just living longer and that's what we want to study in this lesson. Let's begin by looking back to something Jesus said to the Jewish people long ago.

Mark 7:18 - 23 *"So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."*

Remember one of the rules of Bible study from lesson one was asking the question: Who is the primary audience being addressed in the passage? Of course Jesus was speaking to the Jews. And to the Jew of those days, the eating of unclean foods, meats filled with hormones and chemicals, processed foods, too little water – lack of sleep – lack of exercise, none of these things were a problem back then so Jesus did not mention any of these as things they should avoid.

But, what would Jesus say to us today in America? Could what we eat and the lifestyle we live effect what comes from within? Could our diet and lifestyle have an impact on the way we think and our ability to make good decisions? Could it effect even our spiritual life? The answer is, absolutely! The most important reason for maintaining good health is not to live longer, but to protect and ensure that the brain and mind, the control center of our being is in the very best condition.

The study of the brain is a relatively new science. New technology provided by MRI's, CT scans and PT scans have enabled researchers to learn things about the brain that were previously impossible. Today there are many informative books available about this new research. One such book that addresses the spiritual side of this issue is the book entitled, *"Why God Won't Go Away"* Ballantine Publishing Group Copyright 2001 by Andrew Newberg M.D. The following are a few selected quotations from that book:

"The brain is a collection of physical structures that gather and process sensory, cognitive, and emotional data; the mind is the phenomenon of thoughts, memories, and emotions that arise from the perceptual processes of the brain...The mind cannot exist without the brain"

"Every event that happens to us or any action that we take can be associated with activity in one or more specific regions of the brain. This includes all religious and spiritual experiences."

"If God appeared to you in some incarnation, you would have no way of experiencing his presence, except as a part of a neurologically generated rendition of reality. You would need auditory processing to hear his voice, visual processing to see his face, and cognitive functions to comprehend his meaning, and input from the brain's emotional centers to fill you with rapture and awe... There's no other way for God to get into your head except through the brain's neural pathways. God cannot exist as a concept or as a reality anyplace else but in your mind. Even if there were a soul through which God could communicate, it would have little cognitive meaning to us without a brain."

This should help us to understand the importance of the proper function of the brain and mind in regard to our spiritual well being. If our brain / mind is not functioning properly it will have a negative impact our religions experience. We will not be able to think as clearly as we should which will naturally place us in danger of making poor judgments and unwise decisions in the area of religion as in any other.

It is a well known fact that alcohol and drugs can cause problems with the brain's ability to function. But what we may not realize is that things like overeating, eating certain kinds of foods, lack of fresh air, lack of sunshine and exercise, can pose a health risk which in turn will also cause problems with the brain's ability to function properly. For example, if our arteries are restricted with cholesterol buildup and our blood, laden with fats is sluggish, there will be a lack of blood to nourish the heart and the brain.

This of course can cause heart attacks and strokes, but what we may not beware of is that lack of blood to the brain can also cause a person to be open to unwanted influences. In the book, *"Exploring the World of Psychic Powers"* Southern Publishing Assoc. copyright 1971 by Fernando Chaij, Ph.D., Dr. Franz Volgyesi speaking about hypnosis states the following:

"A lack of blood to the brain induce the hypnotic state...the activity of the control centers of the cerebral cortex is suspended... and one's individual consciousness and will power are therefore replaced by those of the frontal cerebral region of the brain of the hypnotist...."

The lack of blood to the brain makes it easier for someone else to "get into our head." Satan can get in our head this way! This is why diet, exercise and lifestyle are so important. The right diet and exercise promote healthy, as well as proper blood flow to the brain so we can think clearly and make good decisions that would be of benefit to us and pleasing to God.

Let's look at some texts that speak about the importance of the mind.

Luke 10:26 - 27 *"He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,"*

Romans 7:25 *"I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."*

Romans 12:2 *"And 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."*

II Corinthians 8:12 *"For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have."*

1 Peter 1:13 *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"*

Living in this world as a man, Christ knew the importance of this health principle for the best function of the mind.

Matthew 27:34 *"And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink."*

Vinegar mingled with gall was a potion given to men who were being crucified to help deaden the pain. But as with all painkillers it also deadens the ability of the mind to think clearly. The Desire of Ages, a commentary on the life of Christ by Pacific Press Publishing, brings out this point.

"To those who suffered death by the cross, it was permitted to give a stupefying potion, to deaden the sense of pain. This was offered to Jesus; but when He had tasted it, He refused it. He would receive nothing that could becloud His mind. His faith must keep fast hold upon God. This was His only strength. To becloud His senses would give Satan an advantage."

Jesus needed His mind to be clear so that He might stay focused on His mission. But what about us? As the followers of Christ, isn't that important for us too?

Our health and physical well being depend upon unchangeable laws. There is no happen-so, no chance, about this matter. Nature's God will not interfere to preserve men from the consequences of violating nature's laws. We will reap what we sow!

There are a number of reasons why this is especially critical for us living at this time.

1) In our world today obtaining food untainted by contaminants is difficult. That being the case, our greatest safeguard is a strong immune system to fight off the diseases that are constantly attacking our bodies. Only with proper diet, exercise and right lifestyle choices can we be assured of a healthy immune system.

2) Because *"every wind of doctrine"* is blowing today (Eph 4:14), our minds need to be perceptive and focused to discern the true from the false. We need to be able to hear the still small voice of the Holy Spirit when He says *"This is the way, walk in it."* (Isaiah 30:21)

3) But if our mind is clouded due to contaminated or improper blood flow, we may not be able to correctly understand God's Word and be open to Satan's subtle delusions and temptations. This may lead us to make poor decisions and in the end be lost because of it. Perhaps even worse, we may confuse someone else and cause them to be lost too.

4) We all need self-control which is the power of mind over body. The ability to do what is best regardless of how much our "flesh" may crave things that are harmful.

Galatians 5:22 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."*

Note the last virtue in this list of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Remember, self-control is the power of mind over body. The ability to do what is best regardless of how much our "flesh" may want to do other things. And as discussed previously, God has created us free beings with the ability to choose. It is not God's will that the Holy Spirit control us. He will teach us, convict us, warn us, but He will not control us. God wants us to have self-control. To have the ability to freely make wise decisions without being coerced in any way. In order to do that we need not only to be well informed, but to have a healthy mind and that is God will for us.

The following are seven keys to obtaining and maintaining good health both mentally and physically.

The seven basic keys to a healthy body and mind.

1. Rest

Proper rest is essential for health of mind and body. Overwork should be avoided, and getting 7- 8 hours of sleep per night is vital. Periods of rest provide much needed quietness and communion with God. The Sabbath plays an important role in this rest.

2. Pure Water

The human body is 75 percent water, but this vital fluid is being lost through exhaled air, perspiration, and waste products. Therefore drinking plenty of pure water every day is needed to maintain efficient health. Another important function is its use in cleanliness, daily bathing, and often washing our hands.

3. Sunlight

Sunlight is essential to life; it powers the process that provides the nutrients that nourish and energize our bodies and releases the oxygen we must have to live. Sunshine is the best source of vitamin D which promotes health and healing. But remember, too much exposure to the direct rays of the sun can be dangerous.

4. Fresh Air

Impure air hinders the blood from carrying the oxygen required for the best function of every cell, including that of the mind which makes a person less alert and responsive. It is important that we secure a generous supply of fresh air every day. The following is a list of things that help provide your body with optimal oxygen.

1. Give the body an oxygen flush by frequently taking slow deep breaths.
2. Don't smoke and don't breathe anybody else's smoke.
3. Air out your house often.
4. Surround yourself with green plants.

5. Be active, exercise.

5. Exercise

Regular exercise results in increased energy, a firm body, stress relief, weight control, healthier skin, improved digestion, and reduced risk of heart disease and cancer, and self-confidence. Exercise is not an option, but is essential to maintaining good health!

Note the following quotes from Time Magazine's Health Report - (Sources: American Journal of Medicine; Institute of Medicine; Cancer Causes and Control)

"Tobacco is the primary non-genetic contributor to death in the U.S.; among other things, it doubles the chance of having a stroke. Poor diet and lack of exercise are second, alcohol abuse is third, microbes and viruses are a distant fourth."

"Score another point for healthy living. Half of all fatal cancers are linked to poor diet, smoking and lack of exercise – all factors that individuals can control."

6. Stimulant free, Drug free life

There are many harmful drugs through which Satan destroys lives everyday, speed, heroin, cocaine - but more commonly used drugs, drugs people try to justify, are just as deadly. Alcohol and nicotine are both toxic (poisonous) substances of which it is best to avoid in any form. Caffeine is another widely used addictive drug that causes many physical and mental problems. Note the following quotes:

Time Magazine Health Report:

"A survey of 22 published studies shows that heavy coffee drinkers face a 40% greater risk of heart attack than non-drinkers."

Self Magazine:

"We found that caffeine impaired recall ability by about 20%."

The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry:

"In a study of the demographic characteristics of the people who use caffeine, it was found that high consumers were also less active in religion."

Since God communicates with us through our minds, we do well too remember that nicotine, caffeine and alcohol adversely affect its function. A Christian who is truly, sincerely seeking to know God better, will abstain from using these or any mind-altering drugs.

7. Nutritious Food

Food produces blood, and blood nourishes the brain, therefore what we eat is very important. To the first humans on earth the Creator gave the ideal diet. According to the Bible in the beginning there was no death and thus no animal products available for human consumption. The first humans were given a vegetarian diet which strongly implies that man's body was originally designed to function best on fruits, grains, nuts and vegetables.

Genesis 1:29 *"And God said, "See, I have given you every _____ that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose _____ yields seed; to you it shall be for _____."*

While it is true that because the Israelites that came out of Egypt consistently insisted on having flesh to eat, that God finally allowed them to have it. But this was an accommodation on God's part, it was not the best diet for them.

And today eating animal products, including eggs and dairy products, is much more harmful than in the past. Considering the hormones, chemicals, and other harmful things used in the food of animals raised for human consumption, as well as the fat, cholesterol and other harmful substances naturally contained in animal products, many nutritionists today agree that the vegetarian diet is the most healthful diet.

There is too much material to provide all the information and evidence available for this subject in this study guide, but there are numerous materials readily available for that purpose. It would be very beneficial to research those materials and keep abreast of the findings of the latest studies and follow the best diet available.

An excellent book on this topic is **The China Study** by T. Colin Campbell, PhD Published 2005 by BenBella Books. The New York Times commenting on this book issued this statement:

"The most comprehensive large study ever undertaken of the relationship between diet and the risk of developing disease are challenging much of American dietary dogma."

Two other helpful sources of information on health and nutrition are the following websites:

McDougall Wellness Center at drmcDougall.com

NutritionFacts.org

Both these websites have extremely helpful articles, newsletters, weekly videos, books and other health resources available.

It is a fact that the health of the body has a direct impact on the mind and our spiritual well being and that following the right health principles promote mental superiority and intellectual power as well as physical strength and longevity.

The Apostle John may have had this connection in mind when he wrote the following:

3 John 1:2 *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."*

Remember Moses words:

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live." (Deuteronomy 30:15)

Throughout these studies we have talked about trusting in God's Word and the importance of believing that what God says is true and that following His word is for our best good, it is right and it is life. The Bible teaches that there are things that demonstrate whether or not a person really trusts God's word. In the next lesson we will take a close look at one of the key issues that prove whether we trust God's Word or not.

Response Questions:

1. The reason a Christian should be concerned about physical and mental health is clear to me. Yes__ No__
2. I will make an effort to learn more about good health habits. Yes__ No__
3. I will practice good health habits that my mind may be more perceptive to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to my mind. Yes__ No__

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