

#22: Word of Wisdom:

What I take into my temple affects my body and spirit

Monte F. Shelley, 5 July 2009

Quotes

- Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint. (Mark Twain)
- He who has no time for his health today will have no health for his time tomorrow.
- Many prefer drugs and surgery to changing their lifestyle.

Timeline of Events Related to the Word of Wisdom	
Eden	Eat of every tree except the tree of knowledge
Moses	Clean and unclean beasts, fowls, fish
Acts	Gentiles: No 'idol' meat, blood, things strangled.
1831	D&C 49, 59. Beasts, fowls, plants for food "to be used, with judgment, not to excess." Wo if kill and no need.
1833	Feb 27. D&C 89. The Word of Wisdom
1851	Brigham proposed that all Saints covenant to abstain from tea, coffee, tobacco, whiskey, ...
1880s	John Taylor urged. Condition for School of Prophets.
1908	Required for local leadership positions
1913	Required to be a missionary
1919	Required for temple recommend
1942	First Presidency. "quit trifling with this law and so ... live it that we may claim its promises." (Oct. Conference)

1. Historical context of section 89

Alcohol, tobacco, and temperance movements in 1800s. What prompted Joseph to inquire of the Lord?

2. What is the purpose of the Word of Wisdom?

A Word of Wisdom ... sent ...; not by commandment or constraint, ... showing forth the ... will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days—³ Given for a *principle with promise*, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints.⁴ ... In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation (89:1–4)

3. What is now prohibited? (General Commandments)

Strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.⁸ ... Tobacco ... is not good for man. ...⁹ Hot drinks are not for the body or belly. (89:5–9)

4. What about modern drinks and other things?

Boyd K. Packer: Members write in asking if this thing or that is against the Word of Wisdom. It's well known that tea, coffee, liquor, and tobacco are against it. It has not been spelled out in more detail. Rather, we teach the principle together with the promised blessings. There are *many habit-forming, addictive things that one can drink or chew or inhale or inject which injure both body and spirit* which are not mentioned in the revelation. Everything harmful is not specifically listed; arsenic, for instance—certainly bad, but not habit-forming! He who must be commanded in all things, the Lord said, "is a slothful and not a wise servant" (D&C 58:26). (*Ensign*, May 1996, 17)

Priesthood Bulletin: "With reference to cola drinks, the Church has never officially taken a position on this matter, but the leaders of the Church have advised, and we do now specifically advise, against the use of *any drink containing harmful habit-forming drugs* under circumstances that would result in acquiring the habit. Any beverage that contains ingredients harmful to the body should be avoided." (Feb. 1972, 4)

5. What is NOT prohibited? (Do not add to list!)

Elder McConkie: "There is no prohibition in Section 89 ... as to the eating of white bread, using white flour, white sugar, cocoa, chocolate, eggs, milk, meat, or anything else, except ... tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor. ... If some particular food or drink disagrees with an individual, then that person should act accordingly without reference to the prohibitions in this particular law of health." (*Mormon Doctrine*, 845–46)

6. What foods are good to eat? (89:10–17)

All wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—¹¹ Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. ...¹⁴ All grain is ordained for the use of man ... to be the staff of life, not only for man ...¹⁶ All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground—¹⁷ Nevertheless, wheat for man, ... and barley ... for mild drinks, as also other grain.

7. What foods should be eaten sparingly? (89:12–15)

Flesh also of *beasts* and of the *fowls* of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with *thanksgiving*; nevertheless they are to be *used sparingly*;¹³ And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.¹⁴ All grain is ordained ... to be the staff of life, ... for the *beasts* of the field, and the *fowls* of heaven, and all *wild animals* that run or creep on the earth;¹⁵ And *these* hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger.

8. What are other healthy habits?

Cease to be idle; cease to be *unclean*; cease to find fault one with another; cease to *sleep longer* than is needful; retire to thy *bed early*, that ye may not be weary; *arise early*, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated. (88:124)

"The Lord has commanded you to take good care of your body. ... Observe the Word of Wisdom. ... *Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep.* When you do all these things, you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost." (*For the Strength of Youth*)

9. What are the promises? (89:18–21; Prov. 3:8; Isa. 40:31)

¹⁸ All saints who remember to keep and *do these sayings, walking* in obedience to the commandments, shall receive *health in their navel and marrow to their bones*;¹⁹ And shall find *wisdom* and great *treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures*;²⁰ And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.²¹ And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the *destroying angel* shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.

10. Statistical good news

A study included "5,231 high priests and 4,613 of their wives. ... Compared to the other groups, the study found the Mormons had an average of 53 percent fewer fatal cancers ... 48 percent fewer deaths from heart disease and 53 percent fewer fatal illnesses of all kinds." (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov 1990, 51)

11. Statistical bad news

"Studies show that Mormons in the state of Utah are, on average, *less physically active* and *10.5 pounds heavier* than their non-Mormon neighbors. ... On average, Mormons eat fewer fruits and vegetables and weigh significantly more than members of other religions in Utah. ... We have more body fat in the state of Utah than we have ever had before in history." (Aldana)

Now Mormons are close to average. Adventists are healthiest.

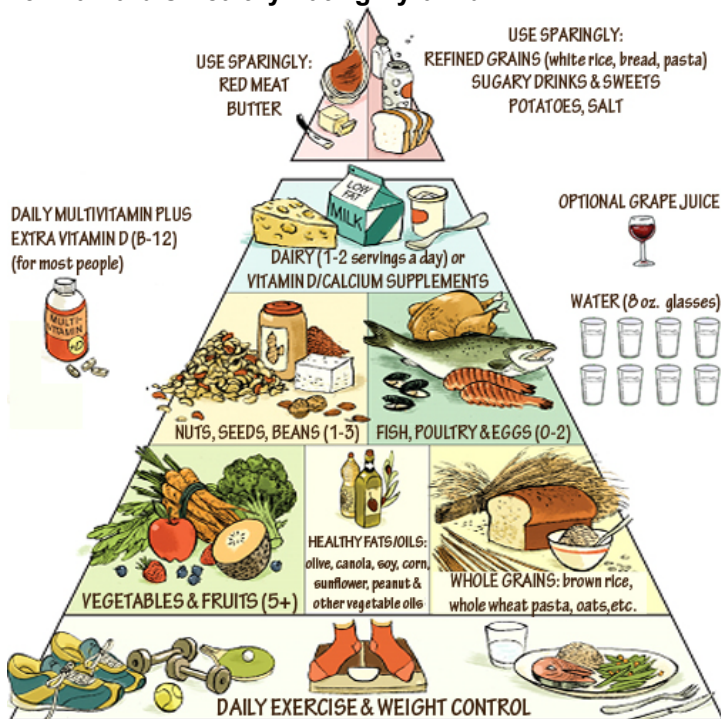
12. More statistical good news

“Mormons in the state of California *who exercised regularly, did not smoke, and got adequate sleep* had death rates due to cancer and cardiovascular disease that were 70–80% lower than the rest of the nation. Males in this population lived an average of 11 years longer than comparable U.S. males, and females lived 7 years longer. ... There is no doubt that if they had a healthy diet and maintained a healthy weight, the extensions of life they experienced could have been even greater.” (Aldana, *Culprit*, 7)

People who	Live extra	Adventists
Are vegetarian	1.5 years	*
Exercise regularly	2.4 years	*
Eat nuts five times a week	2.5 years	*
Normal blood pressure	3.7 years	
Not <i>diabetic</i>	6.6 years	
Maintain <i>normal weight</i>	11 years	*
Do not smoke	14 years	*

To Get Extra Years of Life: (1) Don’t smoke; (2) Accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all days of the week; and (3) Eat a healthy diet. Doing these things can prevent or control 70–90% of chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. (Aldana; CDC)

13. Harvard’s Healthy Eating Pyramid



Adapted from <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>

- **Western diet:** (Red meat, processed meat, french fries, high fat dairy foods, refined grains, sweets and deserts) 59% higher diabetes, 64% higher heart disease than average.

- **Prudent diet:** 16% lower diabetes, 34% lower heart disease

“In a BYU study, 337 volunteers ages 43 to 81 completed a 40-hour educational course over four weeks, where they learned about basic exercise, diet and nutrition. ... Those who adopted what they learned saw dramatic results. ... ‘After six weeks, we saw large and significant improvements in cardiac health risks: Cholesterol improved with around a 25 percent reduction. Blood pressure improved dramatically. Blood glucose for those who are insulin sensitive (... a pre-diabetic indicator) improved somewhat. And at eight weeks out, they lost a lot of weight.’” (Aldana)

14. Develop a personal Word of Wisdom

“We teach them correct principles and the govern themselves.”

Joseph Fielding Smith: “There would be less disease and mankind would live longer if all would also heed the counsel of the Lord concerning the use of wholesome foods. Many a man thinks he keeps the Word of Wisdom, who knows only the ‘don’ts’ which is but a part of its great meaning.” (*CHMR*, 2:148)

“Why does not the Lord give us further revelation to cover the many other stimulants and drinks and the proper foods for the body?” Such revelation is unnecessary. The Word of Wisdom ... points the way and gives us ample instruction in regard to both food and drink, good for the body and also detrimental. If we sincerely follow what is written with the aid of the Spirit of the Lord, we need no further counsel. ... By keeping the commandments we are promised *inspiration* and the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord through which *we will know what is good and what is bad for the body*, without the Lord presenting us with a detailed list separating the good things from the bad that we may be protected. ... There are some ... who cannot eat whole wheat bread and the coarser foods because of peculiar physical conditions. ... Some persons are allergic to one thing and others to another, yet what they cannot take are wholesome to others. Any perfect food that is good for the body, can be harmful by over-indulgence. ... We will have wisdom to understand these things by virtue of faithful observance of ... the Word of Wisdom. ... If anything offered is habit-forming, we will be safe in concluding that it contains some ingredients that are harmful to the body and should be avoided. (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:197)

Quotes

Elder Packer: “Our physical body is the instrument of our spirit. In ... the Word of Wisdom we are told how to keep our bodies free from impurities which might dull, even destroy, those delicate physical senses which have to do with spiritual communication. The Word of Wisdom is a key to individual revelation. It was given as ‘a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints’ (D&C 89:3). The promise is that those who obey will receive ‘great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures’ (D&C 89:19). If we abuse our body with habit-forming substances, or misuse prescription drugs, we draw curtains which close off the light of spiritual communication” (*Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled*, 211).

Elder Bednar: “Our physical bodies ... are temples of God. Consequently, you and I must carefully consider what we take *into* our temple. ... The Word of Wisdom is about readiness and receptiveness to receive revelation. And secondarily the Word of Wisdom also produces physical benefits. Just as only worthy persons are permitted to enter into the house of the Lord, so we should likewise be careful to take into our bodies only those things that will positively affect us both spiritually and physically.” (“Ye Are the Temple of God,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 14)

Ezra Taft Benson: “To a great extent we are physically what we eat. Most of us are acquainted with some of the prohibitions, such as no tea, coffee, tobacco, or alcohol. What need additional emphasis are the positive aspects—the need for vegetables, fruits, and grains, particularly wheat. In most cases, the closer these can be, when eaten, to their natural state— without overrefinement and processing—the healthier we will be. To a significant degree, *we are an overfed and undernourished nation digging an early grave with our teeth*, and lacking the energy that could be ours because we overindulge in junk foods.” (“In His Steps,” *BYU Devotional*, 4 Mar. 1979, speeches.byu.edu; *TETB*, 476–77)