

D&C #22 The Word of Wisdom: "A Principle with Promise"

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I. Introduction

Victor L. Ludlow states,

"Any automobile driver is wise enough to know that one does not put water in the gas tank when the car has run out of gas. However, a few people in some primitive, underdeveloped societies might not be so smart. If they had observed a driver pouring some fluid into the gas tank so the engine could run, they might assume that any liquid, even dirty water, could do the job. A little education and experience would quickly enlighten them as to the wise ways to keep the engine properly fueled so that the quality and length of its performance can be improved.

"In a similar vein, our bodies are like engines because they constantly need fuel (food) in order to function. A wise Heavenly Father has known from the beginning the proper way for humans to feed and care for their physical bodies so that they can function properly for a long period of time. Because of his wisdom and love for his children, Heavenly Father has occasionally directed the prophets with words of counsel and commandment on special health codes. The ancient Israelites were given certain laws of sanitation and were forbidden to eat certain meats, particularly those that would readily spoil or those from possibly diseased animals. God did not tell the people the reasons for these injunctions; he mentioned nothing about bacteria, the dangers of unrefrigerated meats, or other information about why his health commandments were necessary. He simply told the Israelites what they were to do. They then needed to act in faith to gain the benefits of better health and the knowledge that they were doing

what the prophets had told them. (*Principles And Practices of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 429).

In the latter days, God has also seen fit to reveal a law of health, designed to bless the lives of those who are willing to exercise their faith and follow His direction. As we accept His counsel and follow his directions regarding those items He has indicated that are "good for man," as well as avoiding those He had designated as "not good for man," we will reap the promised blessings. If we choose not to follow His law of health, we will forfeit the protection the Lord has promised those who are obedient.

II. Why was the Word of Wisdom Revealed?

This revelation was given to the leading brethren of the Church who met in the upper room of the Newel K. Whitney store as part of the "School of the Prophets." Its organization was given by revelation of the Lord. (see D&C 88:117-141.)

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"This particular and chief school of the prophets was, in fact, organized among the leading brethren of the Church in the winter of 1832-1833 in Kirtland with the Prophet Joseph Smith as its presiding officer. (D&C 90:7, 13). Members of the school were carefully selected; were admitted to membership by the ordinance of washing of feet; were welcomed in the sessions by a special, revealed, and holy salutation; were pronounced 'clean from the blood of this generation'; and in the course of their schooling received great knowledge and marvelous spiritual manifestation. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 1, 322-323)." (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition], 679-680).

Brigham Young states,

"When the school of the prophets was inaugurated, one of the first revelations given by the Lord to His servant Joseph was the Word of Wisdom. The members of that school were but a few at first, and the prophet commenced to teach them in doctrine to prepare them to go out into the world to preach the gospel unto all people, and gather the elect

from the four quarters of the earth, as the prophets anciently have spoken...I think I am as well acquainted with the circumstances which led to the giving of the Word of Wisdom as any man in the Church, although I was not present at the time to witness them. The first school of the prophets was held in a small room situated over the Prophet Joseph's kitchen, in a house which belonged to Bishop Whitney, and which was attached to his store, which store probably might be about fifteen feet square. In the rear of this building was a kitchen, probably ten by fourteen feet, containing rooms and pantries. Over the kitchen was situated the room which the Prophet received revelations and in which he instructed his brethren. The brethren came to that place for hundreds of miles to attend school in a little room probably no larger than eleven by fourteen. When they assembled together in this room after breakfast, they first [thing] they did was to light their pipes, and while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the Elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 12. Liverpool, England: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1869, 157-158).

Zebedee Coltrin remembered,

"After the Prophet came out of the translating room, he read the revelation on the Word of Wisdom to members of the School of the Prophets. 'Twenty out of the twenty-one' present, used tobacco and they all immediately threw their tobacco and pipes into the fire (*Minutes of Salt Lake School of the Prophets*. 13 October, 1883, 55-56).

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

*Why is it important that we care for our bodies?

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"Our bodies are temples and are holy to the Lord. We should keep them pure because they are the dwelling place for our spirits, which are the offspring of God. Respecting our bodies as temples of God manifest our testimony that we are children of God. It also keeps our bodies pure so that they can be dwelling places for the Holy Ghost. How we care for our physical bodies affects us spiritually." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 122).

Doctrine and Covenants 89:4

4 Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: 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--

In the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the heading for Section 89 states, "Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, February 27, 1833. As a consequence of the early brethren using tobacco in their meetings, the Prophet was led to ponder upon the matter; consequently, he inquired of the Lord concerning it. This revelation, known as the Word of Wisdom, was the result." (Heading: Section 89. *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, [2013], 175).

*What does this verse teach about the Lord's reason for giving the Word of Wisdom?

Because of the Lord's vision, He knew that there were many individuals who would market these products and encourage their widespread use. Not only are these drugs harmful to our bodies, but they were also addictive.

*What are some examples of "evils and designs...in the hearts of conspiring men" with regard to the harmful substances mentioned in the Word of Wisdom?

Many of the tobacco and alcohol companies in their advertising seek to glorify the use of these harmful substances by associating them with desirable qualities like being popular, successful, or happy.

*How is the Word of Wisdom a manifestation of God's love for us?

Based upon His understanding of our bodies and those items which would be harmful to us, He gave this revelation so that we would become aware of the dangers they pose for us.

*How is it a manifestation of Joseph Smith's calling as a prophet and seer?

At the time this revelation was given, there was widespread use and acceptance of tobacco and alcohol by the people. With the passing of time, and the result of scientific research, there is now a greater awareness of the dangers that use of these products brings to an individual. Scientific research is now confirming the teaching Joseph Smith received in 1833. This revelation also anticipated the epidemic of substance abuse and the influence, just one drink, can have upon our ability to drive safely.

Paul H. Peterson states,

"The revelation contains proscriptions [prohibition], prescriptions [direction], and promises. The proscriptions prohibit wine, strong drink, tobacco, and hot drinks which were defined early as tea and coffee. The prescriptions enjoin the frequent use of herbs (including vegetables), fruits, and grains and the limited use of meat. The promises indicate that Saints who obey the precepts in the revelations will receive health, strength, wisdom, and 'great treasures of knowledge,' and escape the destroying angel 'who shall pass by them, as the children of Israel,

and not slay them" (D&C 89:21)." (*Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Edited by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and, Richard O. Cowan. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 1365).

III. The Lord's Counsel About What is Not Good for the Body

"a. Wine or strong drink [alcohol].

Doctrine and Covenants 89:5-7

5 That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him.

6 And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make.

7 And again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.

"b. Tobacco.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:8

8 And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and it is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.

"c. Hot drinks, defined as tea and coffee.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:9

9 And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.

Joel H. Johnson recalls,

"The Prophet Joseph Smith...[saying]: 'I understand that some of the people are excusing themselves in using tea and coffee, because the Lord only said, 'hot drinks' in the revelation of the Word of Wisdom...

"Tea and coffee...are what the Lord meant when He said, 'hot drinks.'" (*Voice from the Mountains*. Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881, 12).

(a-c *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 122).

In addition to the above noted substances, we should not:

- "a. Use any substance that contains illegal drugs.
- "b. Use any other habit-forming substances except under the care of a competent physician.
- "c. Misuse prescription and other drugs."

(a-c *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 123).

*What are some of the consequences of using other harmful substances, including alcohol and tobacco?

The First Presidency declared:

"Drunken with strong drink, men have lost their reason; their counsel has been destroyed; their judgment and vision are fled...Drink has brought more woe and misery, broken more hearts, wrecked more homes, committed more crimes, filled more coffins, than all the wars the world has suffered."
(in *Conference Report*. October 1942, 8).

James O. Mason states,

"Each year tobacco use causes nearly 2.5 million premature deaths worldwide. Tobacco use also harms millions of innocent victims. Each year more than 3 million babies are born with birth defects caused by their mothers smoking. Nonsmokers who regularly inhale secondhand smoke have much higher rates of respiratory illness and are three times more likely to die of lung cancer than those who do not inhale secondhand smoke. Smokeless tobacco is just as addictive as cigarettes, and users of the smokeless tobacco have cancer rates up to fifty times higher than those who do not use tobacco." (James O. Mason. "I Have a Question," in *Ensign*, September 1986, 59-61).

The use of substances that are forbidden in the Word of Wisdom is increasing in many parts of the world, especially among youth.

*How does advertising entice people to use these substances?

They say nothing about the harmful effects of these drugs, instead they seek to glorify their use. Often the user of their product is seen as being very successful, well liked by their peers, and very happy.

*How do peers and other people entice people to use these substances?

They use phrases such as, "Just a little won't hurt you"; "Just once won't hurt," "Everyone else does it, what's wrong with you?" and "No one else will know if you try it."

*How can seemingly small violations of the Word of Wisdom be damaging?

The sad part is that once you violate the Word of Wisdom, it is easier to do it a second time, a third, and more. Those who understand the prohibition of the Lord regarding the use of substances, begin to feel guilty. They often try to hide their use from those who may disapprove and seek out social contact with those who use it. It becomes increasingly difficult for the transgressor to be around those who don't use. Their Church attendance begins to decline and they often seek to avoid contact with their Bishop or other church members.

*How can we strengthen ourselves against temptations to use harmful substances?

We need to remember the false advertising that surrounds these substances and that their use will only bring greater harm to our bodies. We need to remember our bodies are temples of the Lord, and not pollute them.

*How can youth help each other obey the Word of Wisdom?

The best way to help the youth is to point out individuals, both within the church and outside, who have chosen not to use these substances. Remind them that they are loved and you are there to help in any way you can. Knowing that

someone cares about you is a great support to those who are struggling with their addiction.

*How can parents effectively teach their children about the Word of Wisdom and help them obey it?

Have an open discussion regarding the merits of the Word of Wisdom and the blessings that come to those who live it. Remind them that not only does its use affect their physical health, it also has an impact upon them spiritually. (see the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* [31106], 228-231).

*Why are addictions to these substances dangerous?

Once an individual becomes addicted to a substance, it is often a difficult road to recovery. Getting their drug of choice often leads to stealing, lying, accompanied by the denial of its effect upon them. In many instances, drug overdose had led to death.

*How can people overcome addiction to drugs and other harmful substances?

The Church has begun an Addiction Recovery Program, designed by former addicts and based upon the atonement of Jesus Christ. Frequent attendance at these meetings has helped many who were suffering from addictions to overcome them. As noted, it usually requires great personal desire and discipline on the part of the addict, together with repentance and help from the Lord. Family, friends, and Church leaders may also provide help, and in some cases professional help may be necessary. While the road is often difficult, it is possible, with the Lord's help, to become clean again.

IV. The Lord's Counsel About What is Good for the Body

Good for the Body:

"a. Wholesome herbs--nourishing vegetables and plants.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:10

10 And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome

**herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature,
and use of man--**

Some have suggested that broccoli, or their other least favorite vegetable should be on the "Not good for you" list. Note that the Lord has not specified those vegetable one should eat, though your mother may, but instead leaves that choice to the individuals themselves.

"b. Fruit.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:11

**11 Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit
in the season thereof; all these to be used with
prudence and thanksgiving.**

Through our ability to import from all parts of the world, one can often find fruit in their local store that has been brought in from elsewhere in the world. Local, often tastes best, but it is nice to be able to enjoy your favorite fruits year around.

"c. Flesh of beasts and fowls.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:12

**12 Yea, 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;**

Doctrine and Covenants 49:18-19, 21

**18 And whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats, that
man should not eat the same, is not ordained of God;
19 For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls
of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is
ordained for food, and for raiment, and that he might
have in abundance.**

**21 And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood, or that
wasteth flesh and hath no need.**

These verses from Section 49, are important for our consideration. We are not to completely abstain from eating

meat, as some have suggested, but as stated, D&C 89:12, to eat it sparingly.

D&C 49:21 seems to have been written to those who enjoy hunting, but they are, in turn reminded, that disapproval from the Lord comes when they waste the flesh of their prey. While an individual may choose not to use the meat themselves, they should find someone who could benefit from the success of their hunting.

"d. Grains.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:14-17

14 All grains are ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but 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.

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 corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain.

Note the specificity of the Lord as to the grains that best benefit man, as well as the other animals. It does not, however, mean for example, that the other grains, including oats, and corn, cannot be used by man. Wisdom must be the guiding word in the application of the Lord's health law.

"e. Retiring to bed early and rising early--getting adequate sleep.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:124

124 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 your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

While this counsel is not found in Section 89, our sleep pattern is an important aspect of our enjoying good health and increased spirituality. I have read that many church leaders, when able, go to bed early. This enables them to rise in the early morning when all in quiet in their home. They report that the morning quietness is often a conduit for their receiving personal inspiration.

Brigham Young states,

"Instead of doing two days' work in one day, wisdom would dictate to [the Saints] that if they desire long life and good health, they must, after sufficient exertion, allow the body to rest before it is extremely exhausted. When exhausted, some argue that they need stimulants in the shape of tea, coffee, spirituous liquors, tobacco, or some of those narcotic substances which are often taken to goad on the lagging power to great exertions. But instead of these kinds of stimulants they should recruit by rest." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*. Selected and Arranged by John A. Widtsoe, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1954, [1961], 187).

(a-e *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 123).

The advice by Brigham Young may to some seem simple-minded. I am recall an individual I met some years ago. He worked for a large company that did business involving various contracts that included specific deadlines. As a result, the managers would often require the employees to work long hours with little rest and for long periods of time. He confided in me that many of the workers, in order to continue their employment, had resorted to taking stimulant drugs, including cocaine. While the company had a strict no drug program, it was understood that the workers would be able to function on the job. He reported that the mirror of the men's bathroom was often covered with cocaine dust!" When I questioned him further about the apparent tell-tell signs of drug use, He responded, it was never addressed by the company.

*What does it mean to use food 'with prudence'?

Hoyt W. Brewster states,

"Webster states that one who is prudent is capable of directing or conducting themselves wisely and judiciously--cautious, circumspect, and discreet in conduct. The 'prudent' against whom the Lord speaks, are those who feign prudence in their own sight' but are blind and 'looking beyond the mark,' which is the 'stone of Israel,' even Jesus Christ...

"To exercise prudence (D&C 89:11; PGP, Abraham 3:21) is to use discretion or to take the best course of action." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 451).

V. Promised Blessings for Obedience to the Word of Wisdom

Promised Blessings:

"a. Physical health.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:18

18 And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow in their bones;

Hoyt W. Brewster states,

"The navel is representative of the inner organs of the body, thus, the promise of 'health in their navel' suggests that they will receive blessings of health to their inner organs." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 243).

Hoyt W. Brewster continues,

"[Marrow]...refers to the soft substance that fills bone cavities but is often used to represent vitality and strength (Doctrine and Covenants 6:2; 11:2; 12:2; 14:2; 33:1, see also Hebrews 4:12)." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 348).

"b. Wisdom and great treasures of knowledge.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:19

19 And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

Hoyt W. Brewster states,

"The essence of wisdom might be expressed in this comparative description by Elder James E. Talmage: 'Knowledge is to wisdom what belief is to faith, one an abstract principle, the other a living application. Not possession merely, but *the proper use of knowledge constitutes wisdom*' (*Articles of Faith*, 100; italics added)." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 644).

Hoyt W. Brewster continues,

"While treasures are generally thought of in a temporal sense...One source suggests that 'treasures in heaven are character, perfections, and attributes which men acquire by obedience to law. Thus, those who gain such attributes of godliness as knowledge, faith, justice, judgment, mercy, and truth, will find these same attributes restored to them again in immortality.

"The greatest treasure it is possible to inherit in heaven consists of gaining the continuation of the family unit in the highest heaven of the celestial world" (Bruce R. McConkie. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1, 239-240." (*Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2012, [Revised Edition], 602).

"c. The ability to run and not be weary and walk and not faint.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:20

20 And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett state,

"Many people who do live the Word of Wisdom do get weary, and eventually even the healthiest among us faint or cannot continue their physical exertions. Some who scrupulously observe the Word of Wisdom cannot walk at all. So, what shall we say, that God only keeps his promise in the Doctrine and Covenants 89 *most* of the time? Of course not. But we must understand that the promises here are spiritual in nature rather than purely physical. It is certainly true collectively, and it is usually true individually, that those who observe the Word of Wisdom will be healthier than those who do not, and this is part of the significance of Section 89 to the Saints. But this is neither the ultimate focus nor the full promise of the principles involved. 'Run' and 'walk' in this verse likely refers to all the *spiritual* struggles and progress in this mortal life, and all the spiritual promises and blessings of the Word of Wisdom are available even to the invalid and the handicapped, if only they will observe the commandments of God. (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2004, 152).

"d. Protection from the destroying angel.

Doctrine and Covenants 89:21

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.

We have been taught through the scriptures the last plague that was pronounced upon the rebellious pharaoh and his subjects.

Exodus 11:4-5

**4 And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD. About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:
5 And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.**

The stage is now set. The promise of the Lord is certain. The firstborn of the Egyptians, including their animals, will die this night.

Unfortunately, the firstborn of the children of Israel will also die if they do not follow the prophets' directions. They are to take a "lamb without blemish, a male of the first year" and "take of the blood, and strike [smear] it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses"...and they shall eat the flesh [of the lamb] that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it...And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover" (Exodus 12:5, 7-11).

Exodus 12:13

13 And the blood shall be to you a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be unto you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

We do not know the number of deaths of the Egyptians, or the number of the children of Israel who died that horrible night. What we know is that those Israelites who did not follow the direction of their prophet suffered the same consequences as the Egyptians. The tragedy for them is that if there had been complete obedience by the Hebrew children they would have been spared the calamity that came upon the Egyptians.

What a powerful reminder from the Lord to us of the latter days to be obedient to the direction of the Prophet. We, too, face dangers in our lives that can be averted if we will heed the counsel of our prophet. The counsel may be simple. Do not drink that; do not use that; do not go there; do not watch that, but if we choose to ignore it, we like the children of Israel, will suffer similar results in our lives. Those Israelites who were obedient to the directions given reaped the blessing of having their firstborn alive the next morning. Those who were disobedient suffered a terrible consequence!

Paul H. Peterson states,

"[Initially], the Word of Wisdom was given as inspired counsel rather than as a commandment (D&C 89:2). President Joseph F. Smith indicated one reason the Lord did not initially give it as a commandment was that it would have brought a good many Church members, who were addicted to some of the prohibited items, under condemnation.

"Beginning with the administration of Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant in the twentieth century, compliance came to be understood as total abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee... It is the only portion of the revelation that [today] has become a criteria for...worthiness."
(*Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Edited by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and, Richard O. Cowan. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 1365-1366).

*How have you been blessed as you have obeyed the Word of Wisdom?

Blessings of living the Word of Wisdom may include generally living longer, and Having a better quality of life than if it is not obeyed. However, some people have severe illnesses or disabilities despite their obedience to the Word of Wisdom. They, however, as a result of their continued obedience, continue to qualify for the spiritual blessings from the Lord. Moreover, the Lord's promises are for eternity, and those who do not receive all the promised blessings in this life will receive them hereafter.

*What are some examples of how obeying the Word of Wisdom help us "find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures"? (D&C 89:19).

Surely choosing not to partake of addictive substances gives the individual a clear mind and increases their capacity to concentrate. It also helps a person to receive spiritual treasures of knowledge, such as a testimony, knowledge of divine truths, personal revelation, patriarchal blessings, and temple ordinances and covenants.

Boyd K. Packer states,

"I have come to know...that a fundamental purpose of the Word of Wisdom has to do with revelation...If someone 'under the influence' [of harmful substances] can hardly listen to plain talk, how can they respond to spiritual promptings

that touch their most delicate feelings? As valuable as the Word of Wisdom is as a law of health, it may be much more valuable to you spiritually than it is physically." ("Prayers and Answers," in *Ensign*, November 1979, 20).

*How might the Lord's promise: "And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (D&C 89:20), apply to us physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

Physically: If we do not pollute our bodies with foreign substances, it would infer we would have increased physical strength, and stamina.

Emotionally and mentally: We would have increased mental clarity that would enhance our ability to learn and problem solve.

Spiritually: We would have increased strength to resist temptation and to "run with patience the race" (Hebrews 12:1) toward eternal life. Our obedience to the will of the Lord always results in an increase of His spirit and guidance.

*How might the Lord's promise: "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" (D&C 89:21), find application today?

Spencer W. Kimball states,

"Now the promise in the revelation quoted above is similar and dissimilar to ancient Israel's test, as comparisons generally are. In both circumstances there would be the element of Passover, the element of obedience of faith without knowing all the reasons why. The 'obedience of faith' is basic. Without it, the miracle cannot happen. Had Israel not obeyed, their firstborn sons would not have been protected.

"For observing the Word of Wisdom the reward is life, not only prolonged mortal live but life eternal. No promise is made through the Word of Wisdom that the faithful observer will not die...With ancient Israel it was physical life or physical death. In our modern promise, it is spiritual life or spiritual death. If one ignore 'these sayings' and fails in 'obedience to the commandments' his death is certain,

but if he obeys implicitly, his eternal life through perfection is assured. The angel of death cuts one short of mortal life for disobedience; the angel of light make the way clear for the spiritual life eternal." (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, [13th Printing, 1972], 211).

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"...the Lord has given us the Word of Wisdom because He loves us and is concerned for our physical and spiritual well-being... the Word of Wisdom is more than a code of physical health; it is also a key to great spiritual blessing. [If we will] treat our bodies the best we can, in accordance with the Lord's counsel about health,...the Lord will fulfill His promises to bless us physically and spiritually."
(*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 125).

VI. Conclusions

The Word of Wisdom is a health law given by the Lord with a promise. His knowledge exceeds ours in all areas. Out of His love for us and His desire to maximize our mortal bodies, He has seen fit to give us guidance and direction. If we follow His directive, we will be blessed physically as well as spiritually.

Why Was the Word of Wisdom Revealed: At this time, the Lord was preparing His servants to go forth to preach His gospel to the nations of the world. They had gathered together in order to be instructed regarding the doctrine of the restored gospel. The use of tobacco was widespread among the population, including the members of the newly restored Church. When Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord regarding the use of tobacco during the meetings, the Lord, seeing the necessity of His Saints to rid themselves of harmful and addictive substances that effected both their bodies and spirits, gave this revelation.

The Lord's Counsel About What is Not Good for the Body: The Word of Wisdom contains prohibitions against: (a) wine or strong drink; (b) Tobacco; (c) Hot drinks, defined as tea and coffee. In addition: (a) Substances that contain

illegal drugs; (b) Any other habit-forming substances, except when under the care of a competent physician; and, (c) The misuse of prescription or other drugs, are also seen as not in keeping with the "spirit of the Word of Wisdom."

The Lord's Counsel About What is Good for the body: Most members are aware of the prohibitions of the Word of Wisdom, including those outside the Church. Many are, however, unaware of the recommendations by the Lord for what is good for our bodies. These include: (a) Wholesome herbs—nourishing vegetables and plants; (b) Fruit; (c) Flesh of beasts and fowl, with meat being used sparingly; (d) Grains; and (e) Retiring to bed early and rising early.

The Promised Blessings for Obedience to the Word of Wisdom: The Lord promises His Saints who are obedient to His law of health, specific blessings. These include: (a) Physical health; (b) Wisdom and great treasures of knowledge; (c) "To run and not be weary, and...walk and not faint"; and (d) Protection from the destroying angel.

The blessings of obedience to the Word of Wisdom are both physical and spiritual. As we strive to be obedient, we will be rewarded for our effort to live His law with exactness. What we choose to put into our bodies may be as detrimental "as if" we were to put water in the gas tank of our car.

Our next lesson [D&C#23] addresses the importance of our continually seeking learning throughout our lives. We should further our education by reading from the best of books, as well as by increasing our spiritual understanding.

