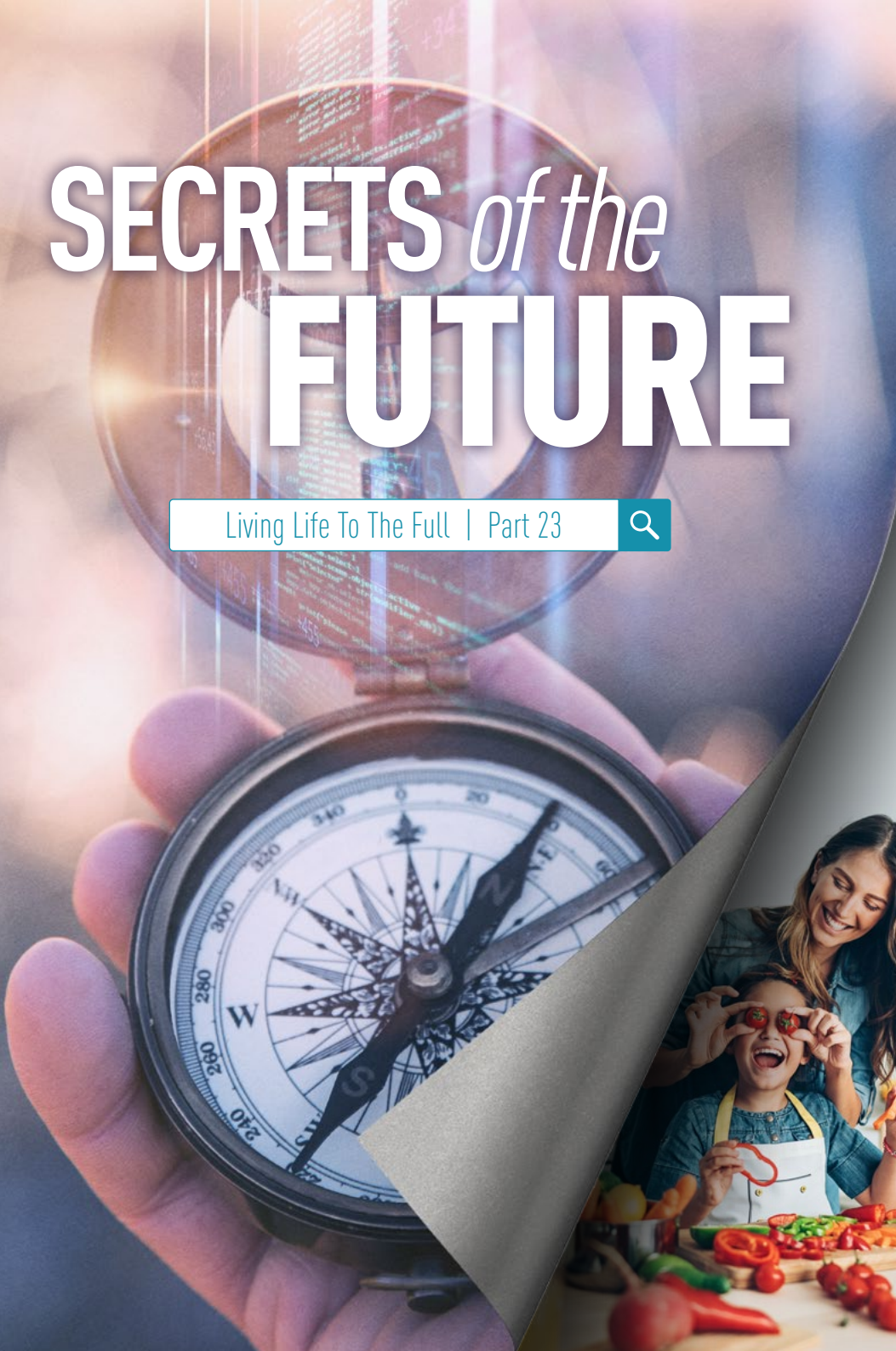


SECRETS *of the* FUTURE

Living Life To The Full | Part 23



LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

How would you like to reach the age of 100 and enjoy every moment of living? In late 2005, *National Geographic* featured an article on longevity and quality of life. The author, Dan Buettner, gathered a team of researchers to scour the world for healthy communities. His plan was to discover pockets of the globe where people were living measurably better than anywhere else.

What Buettner discovered was quite staggering. Four areas of the world were highlighted as “Blue Zones”. These are communities where people commonly live past the age of 100. The current “Blue Zones” are in Okinawa (Japan), Sardinia (Italy), Nicoya Peninsula (Costa Rica) and Loma Linda (California). The research showed that each group has both longevity and vitality of life. They are fresh, energetic and happy. They seem to die young – at an old age!

What is their secret to health and wellbeing? The research uncovered an emphasis on family, relationships, a plant-based diet and exercise. Importantly, each group also has a sense of faith and participates in a spiritual community.

The “Blue Zone” communities are peaceful and content. And yet, there is a clear sense of purpose. The Costa Ricans call their life purpose “plan de vida”. The Okinawans call it “ikigai” meaning “why I wake up in the morning”. Here are people who have created an environment for wellbeing.

Of the four groups, Buettner refers to the Seventh-day Adventists from Loma Linda as the American “all-stars” of longevity. With an emphasis on whole person health, this group has a much lower than average incidence of lifestyle-related illnesses. The secret of vitality for Adventists includes the Sabbath rest, a sense of community, and, according to Dan Buettner, “a diet inspired by the Bible” (see www.bluezones.com).

So what does the Bible say about health? Is there any connection between our physical health and spiritual health? How can we change our health habits? This study guide reveals the biblical keys to a happy and healthy life. We can't promise that you will live to 100, but you should find the experience of living much more enjoyable.

Q1

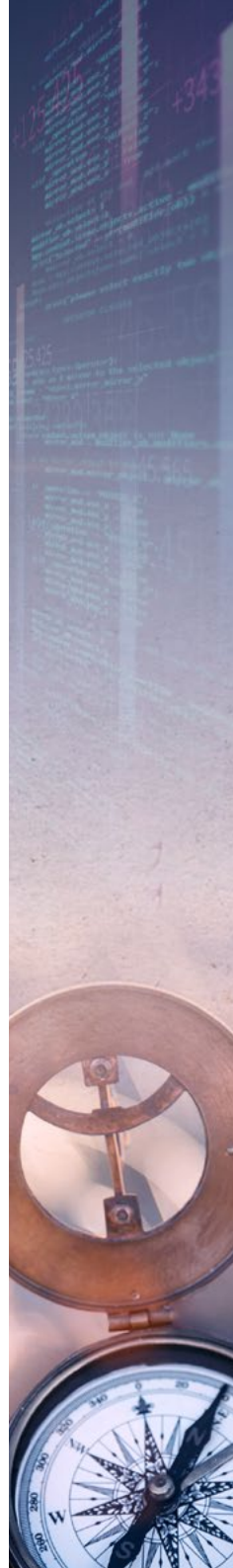
HOW IMPORTANT IS OUR HEALTH?

3 John 2 - *Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in _____, just as your soul prospers*

.....

Health is one of the most important subjects of the Bible. The reason? Human beings are an integrated whole – body, mind, heart and spirit. The apostle John wished his friends to prosper both physically and spiritually. Whatever affects the health of the body, will impact on the whole person. This includes the way we feel, think and interact in our relationships.

When you nurture your body physically, your mind will also be active. A clear mind helps connect to God spiritually. A spiritual life provides a life purpose to be passionate about. These factors form a platform for true health and happiness.



Q2

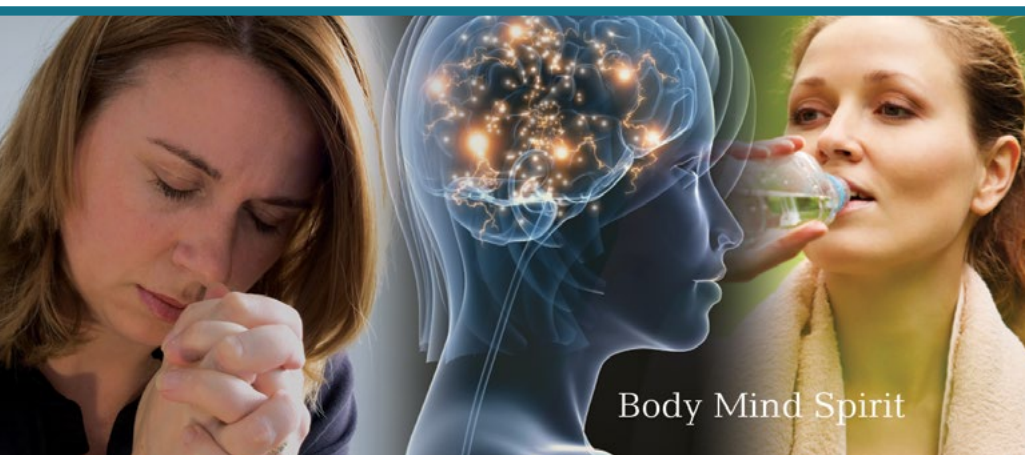
WHY DID GOD GIVE HIS PEOPLE LAWS OF HEALTH?

Exodus 23:25 - *So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take _____ away from the midst of you*

.....

God gave His people health laws to protect them from sickness and keep them from premature and unnecessary death. As the Creator God He knows what is best for our health. God gave the prophet Moses a number of principles that are still very important today.

Some of these principles include: diet (Leviticus 11:46,47), hygiene (Leviticus 14:8), sterilisation (Numbers 31:22,23), morality (Exodus 20:14), rest (Exodus 20:8-11) and quarantine (Number 5:1-4).



Q3

HOW DOES JESUS WANT US TO LIVE?

John 10:10 - ... *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more _____*

.....

Health is not just the absence of pain and disease. It is the presence of vitality. An abundant life!

God's concept of health is an exchange. Something worse for something better. Destroying for restoring. Hollow for satisfying.

God wants us to flourish. To have energy, vitality, radiance, optimism, resilience, enthusiasm, meaning, purpose, fulfilment, joy, activation, empowerment, inspiration and satisfaction. Basically – to love life!

An abundant life includes the personal presence of Jesus. In fact, a Christless health is really no health at all. Jesus provides us with peace, assurance and hope. Not just healing and restoration. Much more. A life of health and happiness beyond our imagination.



Q4

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE CALL OUR BODY?

1 Corinthians 6:19,20 - *Or do you not know that your body is the _____ of the Holy Spirit ... therefore glorify God in your body*

.....

Some people have the attitude, “It’s my body, I can do what I like with it”. But the human life is a home for the Holy Spirit. As such we have a responsibility to nurture and nourish our body to ensure it is in the best possible condition to maintain a loving relationship with God.



If the mind is dulled through sickness then God’s communication is made more difficult and spiritual growth is stunted. Having vitality and good health helps you understand the Bible and establish a close relationship with God.

Q5

WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN ENHANCE YOUR HEALTH?

1 Corinthians 10:31 - *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the _____ of God*

.....

Here are 10 practical principles to live a happy, healthy life. All of them are consistent with biblical principles and many of them are directly mentioned in the Bible.

BREATHE FRESH AIR

Pure air in the lungs does wonderful things for our health. Our lungs are cleaned, the blood is purified and our brain receives a special “boost” of energy. Fresh air also soothes the nerves and keeps our mood positive and optimistic.

We spend so much time stuck in the dust and stale air of houses, schools and offices. It is vital that we ventilate our homes and get out into the fresh air. Venture out for a morning walk. Take a stroll down by the seaside. Or climb a mountain and take a deep breath. You will just feel good!

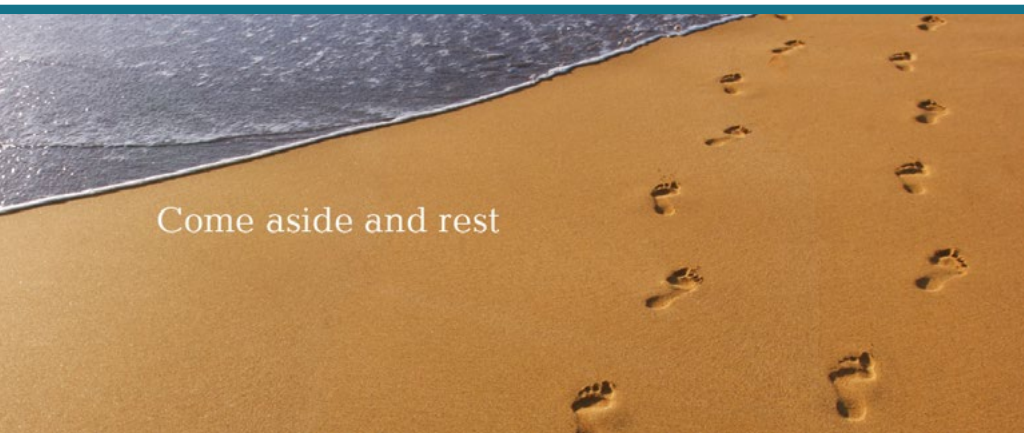
REST

Life today is hectic. The average day is full of multi-tasking, commitments and deadlines. To fit everything in, we often lose out on rest, relaxation and sleep.

When Jesus said to his disciples, “Come aside ... and



rest a while” (Mark 6:31), He knew what He was talking about. The batteries of life need to be recharged. During rest the body is restored and rejuvenated. The mind becomes calmer and clearer. There is nothing better than waking up refreshed after a good deep sleep.



Experts provide a number of tips for helping us get a good night's sleep. Firstly, ensure the sleep environment has a comfortable temperature, is not cluttered with distractions like TVs and radios and make sure you have a good mattress. Secondly, avoid heavy meals, alcohol, nicotine or caffeine before you go to bed. When you wake up, open the blinds or go out into the sunshine.

If life is too hectic, make sure you take a vacation. At the very least, take time just to chill out in nature and relax for a while.

Jesus gave us the Sabbath rest. This is time for our “whole person” to rest and connect with God, family and friends.

SOAK IN SUNLIGHT

It is important that we get out and feel the sun. Of course too much sun can result in skin cancer, so we need to be careful. But exposure to sunlight on our skin produces the very necessary Vitamin D (the sunshine vitamin). Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, which strengthens the bones.



Up to 15 minutes of sunlight a day boosts the immune system and helps reduce the risk of cancer. Sunlight aids mental concentration, gives more energy and can even lower blood pressure. Sunlight also nurtures our emotions and mind. Tests have shown that the life-giving rays of the sun help people who battle with mood swings and depression (Dr Norman Rosenthal: National Institute of Mental Health).



ENJOY LIFE

Our mental attitude to life has a major impact on our overall health. The Bible says, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones” (Proverbs 17:22). Be an optimist and have a good laugh once in a while.

According to author Jane Campsie, “adults laugh on average only 15 times per day while kids enjoy a giggle up to 400 times per day” (De-stress, 2000). Laughter relieves the symptoms of stress through releasing endorphins from the brain. According to researchers Dr Lee Berk and Dr William Fry from Loma Linda University, “happy, joyful laughter produces measurable changes in a person’s immune system.”



There are many other ways for you to feel the experience of enjoying life. Try your hand at one of the arts (play, write or sing music, write a poem or book, create a short film for youtube or paint a picture). Go down to the beach. Fly a kite. Go shopping with friends. Read a good book. Just discover what you are passionate about and do it!

DRINK WATER

Humans cannot survive for very long without water. The body is at least 60% water and is vital for the daily functioning of the body. Water transports nutrients to the vital organs of the body and cleanses the body of waste. Water also lubricates our joints and aids in digestion.

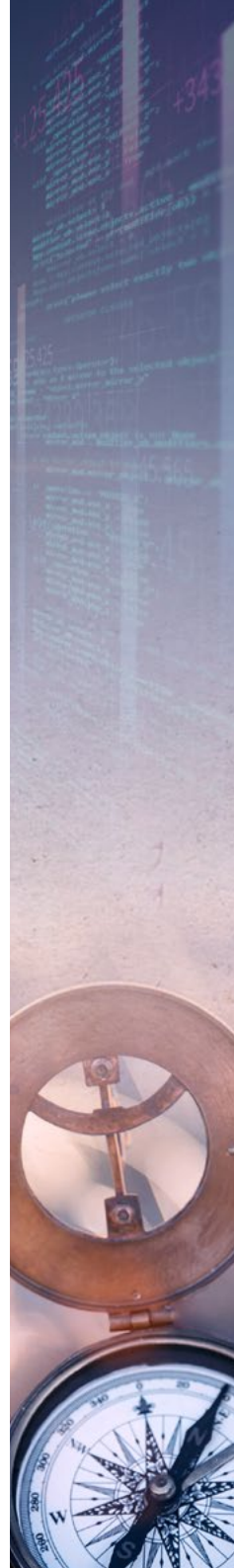
The benefits of drinking plenty of water includes: less headaches, enhanced memory, replenished skin, improved immune system, reduction in the risk of some cancers and weight control. Experts suggest we drink at least 8–10 glasses of water per day.

Water can also be an effective natural treatment for illness. Hydrotherapy is an ancient form of water treatment that uses the stimuli of hot and cold (along with the sensation of water on the skin). This can stimulate the immune system, improve circulation and reduce stress.

NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS

At the heart of human need is to love and be loved. People who have quality relationships, and regularly experience social time, are likely to be healthier and happier. To nurture your relationships you need to spend quality time. Try telling those close to you how much they mean to you. Write them a letter or even a quick SMS message. If you have a disagreement, ensure you don't carry around a grudge. Allow yourself to forgive and be forgiven.

Connecting with the community also can enhance health. Try joining a local community group. Volunteer



and help others. Why not create a community garden in your area.

For the Christian the most precious relationship we have is our friendship with God. As you spend time with Him you will find your whole person health and happiness growing.



BE ACTIVE

At creation God appointed Adam and Eve to do work that involved exercise (Genesis 2:15). Being active provides a variety of very important benefits to our health. Exercise reduces worry and stress, builds muscle, reduces fat, helps us feel good and reduces the risk of heart disease.

Unfortunately, many of us today have jobs that involve very little exercise. It is vital that we still make time in our busy bustle to create movement for our body. If you are just starting then begin slowly. The aim is to get to a point where your heart rate increases while you exercise. Walking is often viewed as the best exercise with an aim of at least 10,000 steps per day. Exercise is cumulative so even if you move your body for 15 minutes two to four times per day, you will be gaining the benefits of being active.

Most of all, find an activity you really enjoy. You will not only get fit and healthy – you will feel good while you do it.

EAT WELL

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

The original diet that God gave to human beings revolved around whole plant foods. It began with fruits, grains and nuts and expanded to include vegetables (see Genesis 3:18). A diet based on colourful fruits, vegetables, seeds, legumes and nuts can be very tasty and these foods restore and nourish the body. Unprocessed plant-based foods have the nutrients that help prevent many chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. They also help maintain a good body weight and help you to feel good.

Man's original plant-based diet lasted for over 1,500 years. Throughout that time the average lifespan was 912 years. After the flood, plant foods were obviously quite rare so God allowed meat to be eaten. There were clear guidelines, however, to ensure health was maintained. God had divided the meats into clean and unclean and He told His people to never eat the unclean. Also God stipulated that the blood of the meat should be drained out and no animal fat should be eaten (Leviticus 3:17).

In the Bible, God is specific in terms of which foods are unfit for human eating. The clean meats are those that have a split hoof and chew the cud. The clean fish are those that have scales and fins. Meats such as pigs, prawns, rats and rabbits should all be avoided as food. Other meats such as cattle and lambs were approved (Leviticus chapter 11, Deuteronomy chapter 14). God is



so serious about this issue that He even says that those who eat swine will be destroyed by fire at the Second Coming! (Isaiah 66:15-17).

In the last days of earth's history it still makes sense to eat a plant-based diet. Unprocessed whole plant foods have the nutrition that people require without the harmful effects of meat. Growing plant foods also uses less energy and other scarce resources than meat production. They are a smart choice for the environment.

Eating is one of the pleasures of life. God has given us our senses so we can be fascinated by food. He has given variety in texture, colour and flavour so we can enjoy our eating experience.

In his book ***Food Rules***, author Michael Pollan makes an interesting statement: "eating what stands on one leg (mushroom, spinach) is better than what stands on two legs (chicken), which is better than what stands on four legs (cows, pigs)."



RESPECT THE BODY

God wants us to take care of our bodies and avoid those things that are damaging.

"If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy Him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:17)

Fitness guru Trevor Romain asks the question – if you don't take care of your body – where are you going to live? That's a good question. If we mistreat our bodies we may not get a second chance. To illustrate: suppose you knew you would only ever have one car in your life. How would you look after it? We would ensure it received good fuel, good oil and good maintenance. We only ever have one body. We should care for our body as if it is the most priceless treasure on earth.

Some of the dangers we need to avoid are:

ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol is unwise and inconsistent with a Christian lifestyle. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1)

There are some studies that suggest positive health benefits from moderate wine consumption. However, many of these same benefits can be gained from other juices and foods. Also, alcohol can negatively impact on the vital organs of the body. This includes the brain, liver and kidneys.



In 2005, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on new research with a headline, “Sobering study says even one drink can do you harm”. The research indicated that even small quantities of alcohol, increased the risk of heart disease. Back in the 1990s researchers discovered that “even just one or two drinks decreases the brain’s ability to gather information ... impairs memory, perception, and judgment” (Look Up and Live: A guide to health. P66). With all the attractions and temptations of the world we need a mind that is clear and in tune with God.

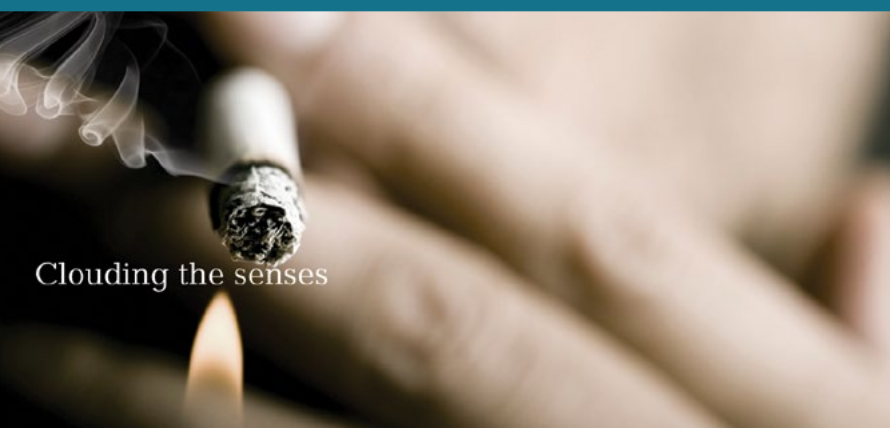
In the Bible, the word “wine” can mean either fermented wine or the pure juice from the grape. God is so definite in His opposition to fermented wine that He says we shouldn’t even look at it! (Proverbs 23:29-32). The wine that Jesus created at the marriage feast was the “good wine” – the same sort of wine described by the prophet Isaiah as “new wine” that is “found in the cluster” (Isaiah 65:8). In other words, fresh grape juice. It is hardly likely that Jesus would create barrel loads of alcohol so people could get drunk!

At the last supper Jesus said to His disciples that He would not drink from the “fruit of the vine” again until they meet again in heaven (Matthew 26:29). Once again, there will not be fermentation and alcohol in heaven – clearly Jesus was drinking the pure grape juice, fresh from the vine.

DRUGS AND NICOTINE

Although cigarettes and contemporary drugs are not specifically mentioned in the Bible, the principle of not destroying your body is found in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 3:17). Drugs and cigarettes are major curses to the health of people within our community. The poisons affect the blood and cause a range of life threatening diseases. God created you to be happy and healthy – the last thing He wants is for you to be smoking or taking drugs.

There are many subtle forms of drugs today that are also causing illness. Try drinking some herbal teas as a replacement to tea and coffee, or fresh juices as a replacement for high-energy drinks – your body will be better for the change.



Clouding the senses

TRUST IN GOD

Trusting in God takes away the worry and stress of life. We know that many diseases originate in the mind. In particular, guilt and fear can affect the whole body. Trusting in God brings inner peace and hope for the future.

Even if we follow the laws of health, it is still God who brings health and healing.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies” (Psalms 103:2-4).

Some may have a chronic illness and see no relief in sight. If that is you then Jesus gives you the promise, “My grace is sufficient for you.” God does not always remove sickness. We live in a world damaged by sin. But if you trust in Jesus, He will sustain you through your challenges. In the new earth we will have new and perfect bodies and there will be “... no more death, nor sorrow nor crying” (Revelation 21:4).



WHAT IS THE SECRET TO CHANGING OUR LIFESTYLE?

Philippians 4:13 - *I can do all things through _____ who strengthens me*

.....

Take your worry, guilt, fear, addictions and bad habits to Jesus today. Jesus is waiting for you to come just as you are. Ask Him for a new heart and the power to break the harmful habit that is holding you. A happy and healthy life is a journey. Why not take the first step today.

Three Points to Remember:

- God wants us to be happy and healthy
- God's original health plan is still the best
- Through Christ, God has the power to break any bad habit

The Story:

A Christian businessman by the name of Jarrod was flying from Los Angeles to Auckland. Sitting next to him was his close friend Tim. After Jarrod had eaten his vegetarian meal, Tim leant over and placed some of his own roast pork on Jarrod's plate. Jarrod just laughed it off and placed it back onto Tim's plate.

Tim thought he would test his friend out and said, "Come on Jarrod. You can't chew your way into heaven." Jarrod responded quickly, "that may be true, but you can chew your way out." He meant that a poor diet could impact our mind and judgement. This in turn, can lead to poor choices and decisions to sin.

He then went on to share with Tim why he followed a plant-based diet. Jarrod shared his desire to be healthy and happy in this life and prepare for the life to come. Jarrod concluded by saying, "I am not judging you Tim. But I am a Christian planning to go to heaven. From what I can work out they are all vegetarians up there. So I figure I might as well get used to it!"

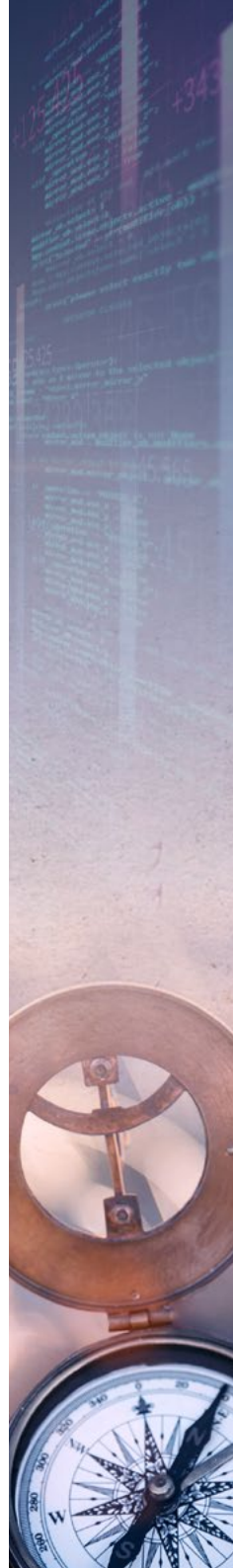
Although this was a light-hearted conversation, what important truths can we take from this story?

Relational questions:

1. How do you maintain the balance between adopting a healthy lifestyle and not becoming fanatical or judgmental?
2. What have you found to be the key to overcoming unhealthy habits?

Your response:

Do you accept that living a healthy life is an important part of a daily relationship with Jesus and would you like to decide today to grow step by step towards a healthy body, mind and spirit? _____



The SECRET *to* SUCCESS

What are the secrets to
living a successful life?

Find out in Part 24 of
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Text: Neale Schofield

Design: Storysmiths

Images: Phil McKay, iStock

Print: Signs Publishing Company

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