

PURPOSE OF STUDY: To show that God is concerned with the whole being – mental, physical and spiritual; and that caring for our physical bodies is an important part of our spiritual health.

TEXTS:

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| 1. 1CO 10:31 (REV 14:6-7) | 8. IS 66:15-17 |
| 2. RO 12:1-2 (3JN 1:2) | 9. GE 2:15 (MK 6:3) |
| 3. 1CO 3:16-17 | 10. MK 6:31 (DT 5:12-14) |
| 4. PR 20:1 (23:29-35) | 11. PR 17:22 (MT 11:28-30) |
| 5. GE 1:29 (3:17-18; 6:21) | 12. PS 105:37 |
| 6. GE 9:1-3 (7:2-3) | 13. JN 10:10 |
| 7. LEV 11 (DT 14) | |

THE STUDY:

- God's final warning message calls us to give glory to God. How? 1CO 10:31 (REV 14:6-7)**
In everything we do, including our eating and drinking.
- Is there any connection between our spiritual life and how we treat our bodies? RO 12:1-2 (3JN 1:2)**
The NIV translation says we should present our bodies to God as living sacrifices, adding "this is your spiritual act of worship". When worshippers offered sacrifices in OT times, these sacrifices were completely given over to God; they no longer belonged to the people. So we are admonished to give our bodies completely to God in the way that we live as an act of worship, because He knows that our physical condition has a direct effect on our spiritual condition.
- Who does the Bible say dwells in our physical bodies? 1CO 3:16-17**
Our bodies are temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There were certain things that defiled the temple building in Bible times, and those things were considered abominable to God. So there are things that defile, or destroy, our body temples. These, too, are abominable to God, as they hinder the working of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, things like cigarettes and other drugs can also literally destroy the body temple by causing cancer and other ailments. The Bible is clear that Christians should avoid these harmful substances.
- What popular body-and-soul-destroying substance does the Bible forbid use of? PR 20:1 (23:29-35)**
Alcoholic beverages are denounced in the Bible as harmful to both physical and spiritual life, and that the wise man avoids the use of them. Some try to defend the "moderate" or "responsible" use of alcohol; yet it should be remembered that 2 of every 5 people who drink alcohol become alcoholics; and that 1 in 25 deaths can be directly contributed to alcohol consumption, while countless other cases of cancer, diabetes, suicide, and stroke can be traced in some way to the use of alcohol. Why would any follower of Jesus want to contribute to such a substance? It is clearly a temple-destroyer. In addition to alcohol and drugs, they are not the only things that destroy the body temple.
- What kind of diet did God give to mankind in the beginning? GE 1:29 (3:17-18; 6:21)**
In the beginning, before sin, we find that God created everything perfect, including mankind. Perfect mankind was given a perfect diet, consisting of fruits, nuts and grains. It is interesting to note that even vegetables did not form a part of man's diet in Eden before sin. Nothing that was eaten would require the death of plant or animal. After sin, vegetables were added (Ge. 3:17-18), and both man and beast ate vegetarian diets (Ge. 6:21).

6. When did God instruct man in the eating of animals? GE 9:1-3 (7:2-3)

It wasn't until after the flood, when vegetation was scarce, that God gave man the allowance to eat the flesh of animals. When God says "every moving thing that lives shall be food for you," this must be considered in context with Genesis 7:2-3. There God instructs Noah in the number of animals to take on the Ark – unclean animals by twos and clean animals by sevens. We need to go to another book of Moses to find the distinction between the two.

7. How are we to tell the difference between the clean and unclean animals? LEV 11 (DT 14)

In Leviticus 11, we find the guidelines to determine the clean and the unclean animals: those that chew the cud and have cloven hooves are considered clean, like cows and sheep. Unclean animals include camels, badgers and pigs. We also find guidelines for fish – whatever has both fins and scales was considered clean. Regarding birds, foraging birds were considered clean, while birds of carrion were considered unclean. These dietary laws were given first to Noah before he went on the Ark, and God commanded him to take more of the clean animals obviously in order to preserve the species, as the clean animals would be used for food and sacrifices. If the unclean animals had been used for either purpose, they would quickly have become extinct.

8. How long does the Bible say these health laws were to be in effect? IS 66:15-17

The distinctions between the clean and unclean will still exist at the second coming of Christ; our bodies are still temples of the Holy Spirit, and God expects us to continue to take care of them.

9. In what other ways besides eating and drinking does the Bible instruct us to take care of our bodies? GE 2:15 (MK 6:3)

Physical labor was a part of God's perfect plan before sin entered the world. Jesus Himself, who came to this earth as our sacrifice and example, could have held any position or occupation, but chose to come as a carpenter. God understands the importance of physical labor, exercise, and true recreation in order to keep both body and mind healthy.

10. What companion to physical labor is essential for humanity? MK 6:31 (DT 5:12-14)

God also created a period of rest in His perfect plan. "Six days you shall labor and do all your work..." God intended man to take period of physical rest as well as setting aside a day for Spiritual rest.

11. What are more and more scientists finding out about our health that the Bible has been telling us all along? PR 17:22 (MT 11:28-30)

Our attitude affects our physical health! Depression, stress, guilt and anxiety all cause physical strain on our bodies. A positive attitude can give physical vigor. However, the Christian understands that he needs more than the power of positive thinking; Jesus promises to give us "rest unto our souls (Greek "psyche" – minds). Jesus can free us from depression, stress, guilt and anxiety, and give us true peace of mind.

12. What was the condition of God's people when they practiced His simple instructions for healthy living? PS 105:37

The Bible records that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." This is not to say that we will never get sick if we follow God's principles, but we will be better able to fight off illness, and we will be much stronger physically and spiritually.

13. How does God want our earthly life to be? JN 10:10

Jesus said He came so we could have life "more abundantly". God doesn't want us to struggle through life with unnecessary self-inflicted sickness. That's why He has so lovingly given us an instruction manual for our bodies, that we might live happy, healthy and holy lives.

APPEAL:

Don't you want to live the abundant life that Jesus offers? Won't you choose today to put God's principles for optimum physical and spiritual health into practice in your life?

DIFFICULT TEXTS/OBJECTIONS:

“Doesn’t Peter’s vision in Acts 10 teach that the clean and unclean distinctions are done away with?” In Acts 10, the Bible tells of a vision Peter had where he saw a sheet lowered out of the sky, held by the four corners, in which were all kinds of unclean animals. The voice of the Lord then told him to “rise, kill and eat.” Many take this vision to mean that God was trying to show Peter that unclean meats were now clean. However, if you read carefully, you will find that that is totally untrue.

The chapter opens with the Lord visiting a Gentile man by the name of Cornelius. He directed the man to go seek out Peter. He knew Peter’s Jewish prejudice against the Gentiles, and so He sent Peter a vision to show Peter that the Gentiles were “clean” in God’s sight. There are several points that make this plain-

1. This vision occurred at least 3 years after the ascension of Christ to heaven in 31 A.D. and Peter had “never” eaten anything unclean in all that time.
2. Furthermore, not once does he take anything from the sheet and eat it.
3. The vision didn’t make sense to Peter. I know people who are ready to say right away that the vision means we can eat anything, but Peter wasn’t so sure what it meant. However, God shows him, and we find out what Peter understood it to mean in verse 28 – God had shown him not to call any MAN unclean.

Clearly, God was trying to communicate to Peter that there is “no Jew or Gentile” in Christ, and that the Gentiles were as worthy of the gospel message as were the Jews. According to Peter’s own explanation, the vision had nothing to do with food.

“Didn’t Jesus pronounce all foods clean?” In Mark chapter 7, the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus criticizing his disciples for eating with unwashed hands. Keep in mind that the entire discussion has to do with ceremonial defilement that comes from not washing your hands. After much discussion, Jesus says in verses 18-19, “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?’” The NIV reads “ ‘Are you so dull?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him “unclean”? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’)”

It seems obvious from this passage that Jesus pronounced all the formerly unclean foods now clean – that is, until we consider a few important points.

1. First of all, the clean and unclean animal distinctions were directly tied to the physical, and not spiritual, condition of the animals. Jesus’ ministry and death did not change the physical make-up of either man or beast. The cross brings spiritual cleansing rather than physical cleansing. Animals that were unhealthy to eat in Jesus’ day are at least as unhealthy to eat in ours.
2. The context of the passage is dealing with unwashed hands, not unclean meats.
3. In our last question, it is clear that Peter, after 3 years of living with Jesus, and at least 3 years after His ascension to heaven and Pentecost, never got the idea that Jesus had pronounced all foods clean. If he had, the vision would have made no sense to him.

So what did Jesus mean? It seems plain to me that he was addressing the need of the inward cleansing of the heart that the Pharisees were lacking while they were focused on having clean hands. He stated a simple physiological truth that our digestive systems purify the foods we eat from our dirty hands. Food enters the stomach (not the heart), and is processed through our system, eliminating the wastes and “thus [“in this way”] purifying all foods.” The NIV and some other versions translate the text in an unfortunate manner, but I believe it is clear from the context that Jesus was not talking about clean and unclean food distinctions at all, but clean and unclean hand distinctions!

“The Adventist church is identified in 1 Timothy 4 as teaching the doctrines of demons by ‘commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving...’” Some point out that “God created” all food to be “received with thanksgiving,” but that is a perversion of this passage. It continues on in verse 4 to say “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” Some interpret this to say that as long as you pray over your food, it’s okay. Notice, however, that the food is “sanctified” – set apart

– by the word of God. That is a qualifying statement on the word food. The question we need to ask is – “Which foods are ‘set apart’ by the word of God?” In other words, what food does the word of God set apart as okay to eat? The *clean* foods. And the Seventh-day Adventist has never “commanded” anyone not to eat the clean foods that the Bible allows.

Some may argue that when Paul says “every creature,” he means “every creature.” In a western culture, this may be appealing. Remember, however, that we all classify as “creatures.” Does God approve of cannibalism? Is Paul sanctioning cannibalism? I think we would be agreed that he is not. But he says “every creature,” doesn’t he? “But he doesn’t mean people!” you might say. “Exactly!”

“Doesn’t the Bible teach that vegetarianism is only for the “weak”? Romans chapter 14 opens by saying “One believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.” This leads some to conclude that vegetarianism is for the weak. Remember, however, that one of the Bible’s most faithful heroes, Daniel, was a vegetarian – at least in his early days (Da. 1:8-16). If this chapter is read carefully, and compared with 1 Corinthians chapter 8, I believe it becomes apparent that the apostle is addressed food offered to idols and the effect on the conscience of new believers. Furthermore, he says he will become a vegetarian if it makes his brother stumble (1 Co. 8:13).

“My Bible says the kingdom of heaven is not about eating and drinking.” (Ro. 14:17). This is a true statement; as Christians we should not be focused on or get into disputes over eating and drinking. However, eating and drinking is still important – we do it every day, with rare exception – and because it’s “not a big deal,” we should be willing to follow God’s prescription for eating and drinking without the slightest argument.

“Didn’t Jesus turn the water into wine during the wedding feast at Cana?” (Jn. 2). Many people don’t understand that in both the Old and New Testaments, the word used for wine can refer to pure grape juice or alcoholic wine, depending on the context (the Hebrew word is *yayin*; the Greek word is *oinos*). Sometimes there is a qualifying word, as in Is. 65:8 which says the “new wine is found in the cluster” of grapes. That makes it clear that the wine spoken about is unfermented, non-alcoholic wine – grape juice. However, the Bible doesn’t always use the qualifier, in which case we must consider the context. Some read about the wedding feast, when the people say they saved the best for last (Jn. 2:10), and assume the best is the “hard stuff.” This is a carnal perversion of the text. Remember that in those days, if you wanted fresh grape juice, you could only get it in vintage season. Out of season, you could only get reconstituted juice. Which one would be better – the reconstituted or the pure? Furthermore, had Jesus made alcoholic wine that would have led only one person, under the influence of that wine, to commit an immoral act, Jesus would be a minister of that sin, which the Bible declares plainly that He isn’t (Ga. 2:17). In addition, Jesus would have contradicted His own teaching in the Old Testament regarding the use of alcoholic wine. However, if he turned water into pure, fresh wine (grape juice), it would have been in perfect character with His creative and redemptive work, demonstrating His own creative power that He uses to make the same grape juice “in the cluster.”

“Didn’t Paul encourage Timothy to drink wine for his stomach?” (1 Ti. 5:23) Yes, he does. The word he uses is *oinos*. Is he speaking of the alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine? Which one is better for a sick stomach? Ask any physician, and he will tell you – alcohol is hard on the stomach, not to mention other things. Grape juice, however, is very good for the stomach.