



DOCTRINE & COVENANTS

& CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 22: The Word of Wisdom: "A Principle with Promise", (D&C 89; Our Heritage, pp. 25–26)

Introduction



"...surely you will not let a cup of coffee stand between you and the house of the Lord."

"I recall a bishop's telling me of a woman who came to get a [temple] recommend. When asked if she observed the Word of Wisdom, she said that she occasionally drank a cup of coffee. She said, 'Now, bishop, you're not going to let that keep me from going to the temple, are you?' To which he replied, 'Sister, surely you will not let a cup of coffee stand between you and the house of the Lord' " (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 67; or Ensign, May 1990, 51).

The Word of Wisdom is a simple, straightforward law. Many people know of the physical dangers of disobeying this law. It is important to remember these consequences, but it is also important to remember the physical and spiritual blessings that we will receive as we obey the Word of Wisdom. This lesson discusses these great promises.

Why was the Word of Wisdom revealed?

Heavenly Father has provided our bodies for a divine purpose. They are a necessary part of His plan for our eternal progression. Because of their importance, Heavenly Father has given us a stewardship to care for them. In our dispensation, as in ancient times, He has revealed principles of good health to help us keep our bodies clean and pure. Our obedience to these principles is an indication of our love for Him and an expression of our gratitude.

In December 1832 and January 1833, the Prophet Joseph received the revelation that became section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Among other things, this revelation directed that a "school of the prophets" (D&C 88:127) be formed to instruct the brethren in gospel doctrine and principles, the affairs of the Church, and other matters.

During the winter of 1833 the School of the Prophets met frequently, and Joseph and Emma Smith both became concerned

about the brethren's customary use of tobacco, especially the cloud of tobacco smoke in meetings and lack of cleanliness caused by chewing tobacco. Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord about the matter and received the revelation that is known as the Word of Wisdom.



Newell K. Whitney Store (upstairs), School of the Prophets Room

Next Week

#23 "Seek Learning, Even by Study and Also by Faith" (See Study Guide)

Lesson Highlights

- Why was the Word of Wisdom revealed?
- The Lord's counsel about what is not good for the body
- The Lord's counsel about what is good for the body
- Promised blessings for obedience to the Word of Wisdom

A study of this lesson will encourage us to obey the counsel in the Word of Wisdom, as well as the Lord's other counsel about physical health.



This revelation gave the Lord's commandments for the care of the body and spirit, and promised that those who obeyed them would receive the spiritual blessings of "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and **6:19-20** give reasons for caring for our bodies as temples of our spirits. We also need pure bodies so that the Holy Ghost can be our companion. Caring for our bodies physically has a definite effect on our spiritual health.

D&C 89:4 gives another reason for the Lord's revelation of the Word of Wisdom. An example of the "evils and designs...in the hearts of conspiring men" that are associated with harmful substances include the misrepresentations associated with happiness, success, and social relationships

The Lord's counsel about what is not good for the body

The Lord has not specified everything that we should and should not partake of. "*Such revelation is unnecessary,*" **President Joseph Fielding Smith** said. "*The Word of Wisdom is a basic law. It points the way and gives us ample instruction in regard to both food and drink. ... If we sincerely follow what is written with the aid of the Spirit of the Lord, ... we will know what is good and what is bad for the body*" ("Your Question: The Word of Wisdom," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1956, 78-79).

Not for the Body

- **D&C 89:5-7** – Wine and strong drink (alcoholic beverages)
- **D&C 89:8** – Tobacco (smoking and smokeless tobacco use)
- **D&C 89:9** – Hot drinks, defined as tea and coffee (That IS the doctrinal requirement)

In addition to these substances, we should not:

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

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, Oct. 1942, 8).

that are put forth in advertising and entertainment. TV and movies continue to encourage the use and abuse of substances.

The Word of Wisdom also contained information about health that was not known to the medical or scientific world at the time but has since been proven to be of great benefit, such as the counsel not to use tobacco or alcohol.

The Lord showed his love for us in His requirement for obedience when He gave 18 years (a generation) between revealing the principles in 1833 and making them a commandment in 1851. He gave the opportunity for those addicted to tobacco and/or strong drink, etc. to overcome their difficulties before He asked the Saints to observe these principles to be regarded as being "worthy" for full fellowship in the Church.

Each year tobacco use causes nearly 2.5 million premature deaths worldwide. Tobacco use also harms millions of innocent victims. For example, smoking by pregnant mothers passes on toxic chemicals that interfere with fetal development, afflicting approximately 3 million babies each year. These babies have lower birth weight and increased risk for neurological and intellectual delays and for premature death. Other innocent victims include nonsmokers who regularly inhale secondhand smoke. These people 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 smokeless tobacco have cancer rates up to fifty times higher than those who do not use tobacco. (See James O. Mason, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Sept. 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. The harmful substances that are prohibited in the Word of Wisdom cause addiction.

There is hope for people who struggle with addiction. Overcoming addiction usually requires great personal desire and discipline, 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.

"All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings ... shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (D&C 89:18-20).



The Lord's counsel about what is good for the body

Good for the Body

- **D&C 89:10** – Wholesome herbs—nourishing vegetables and plants
- **D&C 89:11** – Fruit
- **D&C 89:12** – Flesh of beasts and fowls (Note the guidance on using meats; see also D&C 49:19, 21)
- **D&C 89:14-17** – Grains (Note the guidance on using grains in verses 14 and 16)
- **D&C 88:124** – retiring to bed early and rising early—getting adequate sleep

We should eat food that nourishes our bodies and use moderation in the kind and amount of food we eat.

Promised blessings for obedience to the Word of Wisdom

The Lord revealed the Word of Wisdom as "a principle with promise" (D&C 89:3).

Promised Blessings

- **D&C 89:18**. Physical health.
- **D&C 89:19**. Wisdom and great treasures of knowledge.
- **D&C 89:20**. The ability to run and not be weary and walk and not faint.
- **D&C 89:21**. Protection from the destroying angel.

Those who obey the Word of Wisdom will generally live longer and have a better quality of life than if they did not obey it. However, some people have severe illnesses or disabilities despite obeying the Word of Wisdom. These people can receive the spiritual blessings of obeying the Word of Wisdom even if their physical difficulties continue. 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.

Obeying the Word of Wisdom helps a person's mental capacities. It also helps a person receive spiritual treasures of knowledge, such as testimony, knowledge of divine truths, personal revelation, patriarchal blessings, and temple ordinances and covenants.

Conclusion

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 blessings. Evaluate whether you are treating your body the best you can, in accordance with the Lord's counsel about health. As we follow this counsel, the Lord will fulfill His promises to bless us physically and spiritually.

President Brigham Young said: "*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 entirely exhausted. When exhausted, some argue that they need stimulants. ... But instead of these kind of stimulants they should recruit by rest*" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 187).

Elder Boyd K. Packer said: "*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*" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 28–29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 20).

The promise of D&C 89:20 could include increased mental and emotional strength, self-mastery, and self-sufficiency. Additionally, we may gain increased strength to resist temptation and the patience required to continue, day after day, in the struggle toward eternal life.

Regarding D&C 89:21, anciently, just before the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, the destroying angel passed over the Israelites' firstborn sons because the people obeyed the prophet Moses and marked their doors with lamb's blood (Exodus 12). Similarly, as we "*[walk] in obedience to the commandments,*" including the Word of Wisdom, the destroying angel will pass by us, meaning we will be saved from spiritual death and blessed with eternal life through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. (See Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May 1996, 19.)

President Heber J. Grant:

"No man who breaks the Word of Wisdom can gain the same amount of knowledge and intelligence in this world as the man who obeys the law. I don't care who he is or where he comes from, his mind will not be as clear, and he cannot advance as far and as rapidly and retain his power as much as he would if he obeyed the Word of Wisdom." (CR, Apr 1925)

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How have you been blessed by keeping this law?

