

Principles and Promises

By President Thomas S. Monson

May we care for our bodies and our minds by observing the principles set forth in the Word of Wisdom, a divinely provided plan.

Tonight, brethren, I pray for the guidance of our Heavenly Father as I share my message with you.

In 1833 the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a plan for healthy living. That plan is found in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and is known as the Word of Wisdom. It gives specific direction regarding the food we eat, and it prohibits the use of substances which are harmful to our bodies.

Those who are obedient to the Lord's commandments and who faithfully observe the Word of Wisdom are promised particular blessings, among which are good health and added physical stamina.¹

Recently I read the true account of a dramatic manifestation concerning these promises. A faithful member of the Church, John A. Larsen, served during World War II in the United States Coast Guard on the ship *USS Cambria*. During a battle in the Philippines, word came of an approaching squadron of bombers and kamikaze fighter planes. Orders were given for immediate evacuation. Since the *USS Cambria* was already gone, John and three companions gathered their gear and hurried to the beach, hoping for a lift out to one of the departing ships. Fortunately, a landing craft picked them up and sped toward the last ship leaving the bay. The men on that departing ship, in an effort to evacuate as quickly as possible, were busy on deck and had time only to throw ropes to the four men, that they might hopefully be able to climb to the deck.

John, with a heavy radio strapped to his back, found himself dangling at the end of a 40-foot (12 m) rope, at the side of a ship headed out to the open sea. He began pulling himself up, hand over hand, knowing that if he lost his grip, he would almost certainly perish. After climbing only a third of the way, he felt his arms burning with pain. He had become so weak that he felt he could no longer hold on.

With his strength depleted, as he grimly contemplated his fate, John silently cried unto God, telling Him that he had always kept the Word of Wisdom and had lived a clean life—and he now desperately needed the promised blessings.

John later said that as he finished his prayer, he felt a great surge of strength. He began climbing once again and fairly flew up the rope. When he reached the deck, his breathing was normal and not the least bit labored. The blessings of added health and stamina promised in the Word of Wisdom had been his. He gave thanks to his Heavenly Father then, and throughout the remainder of his life, for the answer to his desperate prayer for help.²

Brethren, may we care for our bodies and our minds by observing the principles set forth in the Word of Wisdom, a divinely provided plan. With all my heart and soul, I testify of the glorious blessings which await us as we do. That this may be so, I pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

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