



# Temporal and Spiritual Blessings from the Word of Wisdom

*Our Heavenly Father gave us the Word of Wisdom to bless us with physical health and prepare us for eternal life.*

## **From the Life of George Albert Smith**

When George Albert Smith was a child, he was afflicted with typhoid fever. The doctor who diagnosed him told his mother that he should stay in bed for three weeks, eat no solid food, and drink some coffee. President Smith later recalled:

“When he went away, I told mother that I didn’t want any coffee. I had been taught that the Word of Wisdom, given by the Lord to Joseph Smith, advised us not to use coffee.

“Mother had brought three children into the world and two had died. She was unusually anxious about me.”

Young George Albert Smith asked instead for a priesthood blessing, which he received from his home teacher.

“When the doctor came the next morning I was playing outside with the other children. He was surprised. He examined me and discovered that my fever was gone and that I seemed to be well.

“I was grateful to the Lord for my recovery. I was sure that he had healed me.”<sup>1</sup>

President Smith wanted the Saints to understand that obedience to the Word of Wisdom brings not only physical health but spiritual blessings as well. In a priesthood session of general conference, he told the story of the Old Testament prophet Daniel, who was taken



*President Smith taught that because Daniel observed the Lord's law of health in his day, he was worthy of "the inspiration of the Almighty."*

captive into Babylon and was expected to eat the king's meat and drink the king's wine:

“Daniel was a prophet of God, and he was a prophet because he kept the commandments of God. I would like you . . . to take this message with you. Daniel observed the teachings of God with his companions, with reference to the kind of food and drink they should have, and refused to accept the food that was served upon the king's table. [See Daniel 1:3–16.]”

President Smith went on to explain that because of Daniel's obedience to the Lord's law of health in his day, not only was his life preserved, but Daniel also received a great spiritual blessing: “the inspiration of the Almighty.”<sup>2</sup> [See suggestion 1 on page 209.]

## **Teachings of George Albert Smith**

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### **The Word of Wisdom is loving counsel from our Father, who knows all things.**

I am going to read you a portion of what the Lord said to the Church on February 27th, 1833.

“A Word of Wisdom, for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and the Church and also the Saints of Zion—

“To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days.”

Now just think of that for a moment—“in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days.”

“Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.” [See D&C 89:1–3.]

Then the Lord continues to tell us the things that are good for us, explains the kind of food that it is desirable for us to use, and then warns us against some of the things that have been most deleterious and harmful [see D&C 89:5–17].

It seems to me that as a people we have been marvelously blessed. . . . The Lord has been merciful to us, to caution us, advise us and warn us with regard to many things.<sup>3</sup>

I look upon the Word of Wisdom as kind advice of our Father in heaven, who desires to see His children become more like Him. . . . I take it as the fatherly counsel of one who, knowing what I needed, said to me: “My son, these things are not good for you, and if you will avoid them I will give you the companionship of my Holy Spirit and joy while you live in the world and in the end eternal life.” How foolish I would be then to partake of these forbidden things, having the assurance that it is the counsel of the Lord I should abstain therefrom. I would feel under condemnation if I should partake of them, when He who knows better than anybody else says that they are harmful, and has warned me against them. . . .

. . . He thought it of enough importance to give it unto us, and to warn us, and if He who knows all things thought it necessary to give advice and counsel upon these temporal matters, how carefully we, who know not what the morrow has in store for us, should observe that divine counsel. I feel that the Latter-day Saints have in the Word of Wisdom a law that will exalt them and lift them above those who fail to keep it.<sup>4</sup>

The gospel of Jesus Christ is to preserve souls, of which the body is the tabernacle, for eternal happiness. How foolish we are if we give way to the habits and customs of the world! . . . Our Heavenly Father in his kindness and love [warned]: “In consequence of the 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.” (D&C 89:4.) . . . The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to prepare us to understand the beauty of life as the Lord has indicated it should be lived, by telling us how we may avoid the things that are destroying the world.<sup>5</sup>

Do you believe that the Lord gave to us the Word of Wisdom? Do you really think that he knows what is good for us? Do you think it would please him if we would observe that law? He says it would. Do you think he meant it?<sup>6</sup>

Brethren and sisters, we cannot with impunity look slightly upon the Word of Wisdom. It was given as counsel and advice, not by commandment or constraint, but as a word of wisdom, from our Father, for the temporal salvation of our bodies and the preparation of our souls for eternal life.<sup>7</sup> [See suggestion 2 on page 210.]

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**The Lord promises mental and physical health  
to those who obey the Word of Wisdom.**

I am grateful for that wonderful Word of Wisdom, simple as it is, and as the Lord says, “adapted to the capacity of the weak or the weakest of all who are or can be called Saints.” I pause to ask . . . , are we worthy to be called Saints? All who hope to be called Saints should certainly be observers of the Word of Wisdom. And what does it mean to us? It gives us sweetness of life, it takes from us the poisonous vapors that many people breathe as the result of smoking tobacco. It avoids for us that nauseating condition that is the result of chewing tobacco. It preserves us, if we observe it, from the infirmities due to taking into our systems the [drugs] contained in tea and coffee, and from the disastrous effects of liquor. . . .

Our Heavenly Father not only tells us what we should avoid, but tells us what we may use with profit. He has said to us that all grain, all wholesome herbs, the fruit of the vine etc., are good for man. Flesh of beast and fowls of the air; and these things he refers to we may use with prudence and thanksgiving; and I want to emphasize with thanksgiving.<sup>8</sup>

We observe that compliance with the laws of health produces mental and physical strength, and we discover that through disobedience thereto, mental and physical deterioration follows. It is our Creator, the Father of our spirits, who gave us opportunity to dwell upon this earth, who has said that certain things referred to in that revelation are not good for us. He has made us valuable promises, if we will obey this law,—promises of wisdom, of health and strength, and that the destroying angel shall pass us by and not hurt us, as he did the children of Israel [see D&C 89:18–21].<sup>9</sup> [See suggestion 3 on page 210.]



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**Obeying the Word of Wisdom strengthens  
our faith and spirituality.**

I am fully convinced that the Lord in His mercy, when He gave us the Word of Wisdom, gave it to us, not alone that we might have health while we live in the world, but that our faith might be strengthened, that our testimony of the divinity of the mission of our Lord and Master might be increased, that thereby we might be better prepared to return to his presence when our labor here is complete. I fear that as sons and daughters of Zion we sometimes fail to realize the importance of this great message to the world.<sup>10</sup>

I want to say to you, in my judgment, that the use of tobacco, a little thing as it seems to some men, has been the means of destroying their spiritual life, has been the means of driving from them the companionship of the Spirit of our Father, has alienated them from the society of good men and women, and has brought upon

them the disregard and reproach of the children that have been born to them, and yet the devil will say to a man, Oh, it's only a little thing!<sup>11</sup>

We are living in a day when the Lord has spoken again to His people. We, who are members of the Church, who have complied with the requirements of our Father in Heaven, understand perfectly that God lives and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently serve Him. We understand that He has given certain rules and regulations to govern us in this life, and obedience to His requirements insures us His pleasure, and the blessings promised will follow our obedience; but, if we fail to obey His teachings, if we ignore His wise counsels, then we have no promise from Him, and we are wasting opportunities that will not come to us again. I feel the importance of the Latter-day Saints observing this particular law [the Word of Wisdom]. I believe that by obedience to it, much more faith may be enjoyed by the Latter-day Saints. We read in the teachings of Mormon that if there were not miracles wrought among that people it was because they did not have faith; and he told them, further, that without faith, “awful was the state of man.” [See Moroni 7:37–38.] If we violate the known will of the Lord it is natural that our faith will wane, for the Spirit will not always strive with us. . . .

. . . I firmly believe that by reason of neglect of this simple requirement, faith has diminished in the hearts of some of our people—that, by a more general observance of the Word of Wisdom, faith will be increased among the Latter-day Saints, and greater knowledge will flow to us as a result; for by obedience to it, there will come a disposition to obey other laws of our Father, and compliance with each insures a blessing.<sup>12</sup> [See suggestions 3 and 4 on page 210.]

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**By obeying the Word of Wisdom,  
we prepare for eternal life.**

I sometimes wonder if Latter-day Saints realize that [the Word of Wisdom] has been given to us for our exaltation; not only for our temporal blessing, but to prepare us for spiritual life. . . .

We are told that the glory of God is intelligence [see D&C 93:36], and we all admire intelligent men and women, therefore it should be our desire to lay the foundation for increased mental power and not do anything to weaken it. It is evident in the lives of some that they deprive themselves of the brain power they might enjoy, by the continued use of things our Heavenly Father has said are not good; they become less intelligent as a result, and fail to make the preparation for Eternal life that should be their ambition.<sup>13</sup>

If we believe as we claim, that Jesus is the Christ, and that we are the children of our Heavenly Father, then how careful we should be to conduct ourselves that we may be worthy of the temples we occupy, which were created in the image of God. How many of us realize that by taking into our systems things that our Father has forbidden, we defile the temple of the spirit? How many of us stop to consider that when we give way to weakness of the flesh, we deprive ourselves of opportunities that await us in the future, and cut ourselves off from the blessings that the Lord hath in store for the faithful?<sup>14</sup>

If this law, that is adapted to the capacity of the weakest of us, is obeyed, it will be a foundation upon which may be added many great blessings that our Father will be pleased to bestow, that otherwise we would not be entitled to and could not receive. How can any of us feel justified in ignoring a simple law of God that He, by His own voice, has said any of us can obey? Can we expect to be able to keep a higher law, and be able to attain great exaltation, if we fail to keep this simple requirement?<sup>15</sup> [See suggestion 3 on page 210.]

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**The best way to teach our families to obey the  
Word of Wisdom is to obey it ourselves.**

Fathers and mothers, if they will keep the Word of Wisdom, may transmit to their offspring virtues and strength that they could not otherwise give to them. I believe that the companionship of the Spirit of our Father will be in the hearts and homes of those who keep this law, and their desire to be obedient will be transmitted to their children. . . . It is a well known fact that the effect of tobacco

upon the child brain is most harmful, destroying the memory and dulling the finer senses; also, that the effect of liquor upon the youthful brain is very deleterious: it breaks down the desire to be honorable and upright, and leads to vice and crime. . . . The Lord has given us this law in kindness and love, promising certain blessings if we will obey His counsel. I feel to exhort you, my brethren and sisters, to teach this in your homes. Call the attention of your growing children to it, and to the reward predicated on its observance.

Let me say to you that the best evidence of our faith in that law, that we believe it came from God, is a consistent observance of it in our lives. We may preach it all day long, but if we transgress it in practice, our example may be disastrous to those we love better than life, for they will feel that they can safely follow where we lead.<sup>16</sup>

Let me plead with you, search the Word of Wisdom prayerfully. Do not just read it; search it prayerfully. Discover what our Heavenly Father gave it for. He gave it to us with a promise of longer life and happiness, not if we fail to observe it, but if we observe it. Read the Word of Wisdom in the presence of your families and set the example. If we will do that Zion will continue to grow. If we will do that the Church of the Lamb of God will continue to become a power for good in the world.<sup>17</sup> [See suggestion 5 on page 210.]

## **Suggestions for Study and Teaching**

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Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. On page 203, President Smith refers to the story of Daniel declining to partake of the king's meat and wine. Read Daniel chapter 1, and think about an experience you may have had when you were expected to partake of something that is forbidden in the Word of Wisdom. What are some appropriate ways to obey the Word of Wisdom in such circumstances while still being respectful to others?

2. Review the first section of teachings (pages 203–5). How could you use these teachings to help someone who is having difficulty obeying the Word of Wisdom?
3. Briefly review pages 205–8, in which President Smith discusses some of the blessings promised to those who obey the Word of Wisdom (see also D&C 89:18–21). How have these promises been fulfilled in your life? What other blessings have you received as you have lived this law?
4. On page 207, President Smith promises that obeying the Word of Wisdom brings a “disposition to obey.” What does this phrase mean to you?
5. In your opinion, how does our obedience to the Word of Wisdom help the Church “become a power for good in the world”? (page 209). Prayerfully study section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, as President Smith suggests, and ponder what you can do to obey the Word of Wisdom more fully.

*Related Scriptures:* 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Alma 34:36; Doctrine and Covenants 29:34; 130:20–21

*Teaching help:* “You can express love for those you teach by listening attentively to them and being sincerely interested in their lives. Christlike love has the power to soften hearts and help people be receptive to the whisperings of the Spirit” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 46).

### Notes

1. “Boyhood Experiences,” *Instructor*, Feb. 1943, 73.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1943, 44.
3. “Saints Blessed,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 12, 1932, Church section, 5.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1907, 19–21.
5. “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1947, 688.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1935, 121.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1907, 21.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1923, 72–73.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1907, 19.
10. In Conference Report, Apr. 1907, 19.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1918, 40.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1908, 83–84.
13. In Conference Report, Apr. 1907, 19.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 62.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1908, 84.
16. In Conference Report, Apr. 1907, 21.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 191.