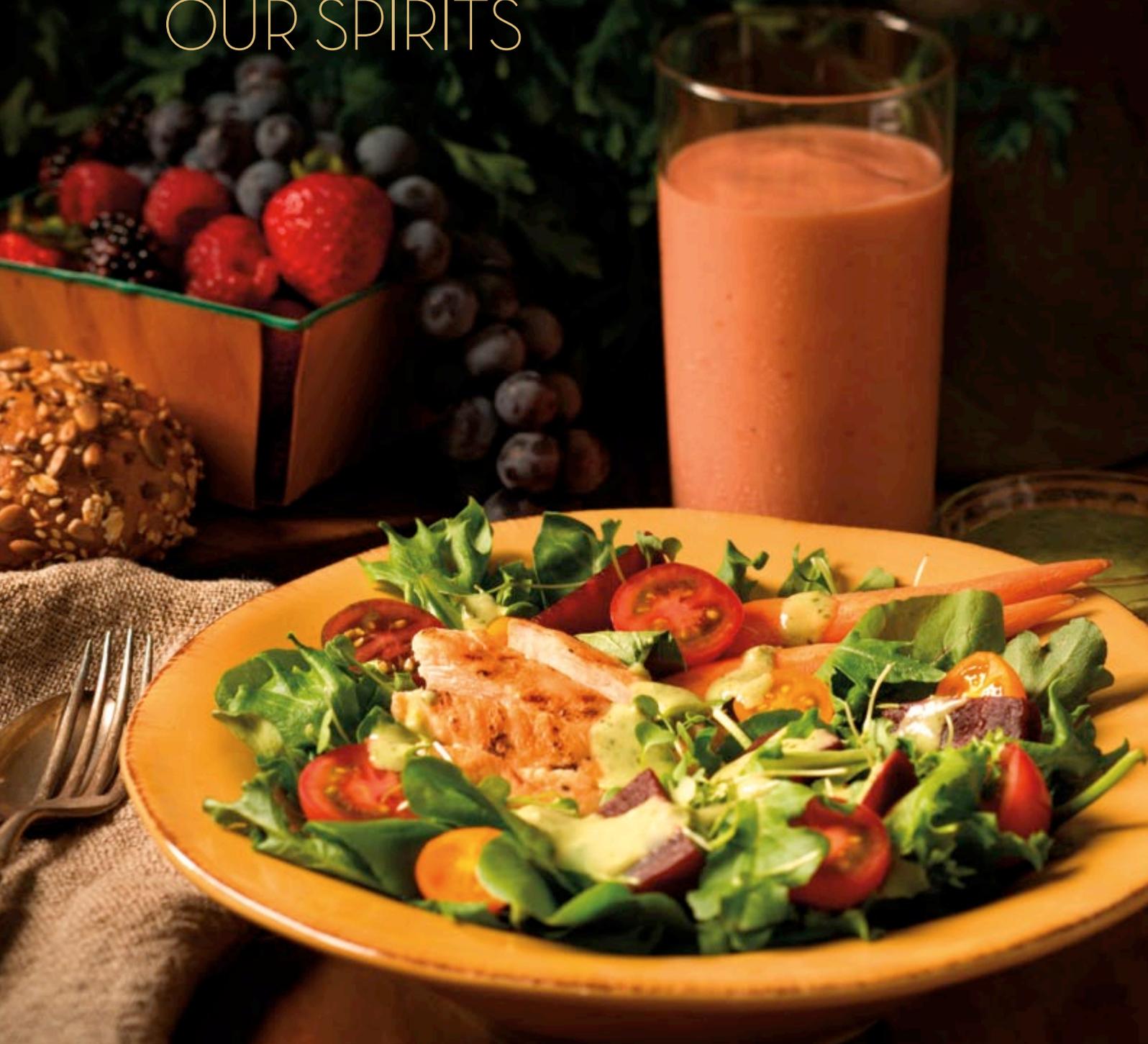


Nourishing

OUR BODIES *AND*
OUR SPIRITS



By Beverly Hyatt Neville

Dietitian and Health Educator

Many years ago I served a welfare services mission in rural Colombia, where we taught about health and nutrition. When we saw mothers feed their children just rice and plantains (similar to bananas), we encouraged them to include more protein foods in their diet. One mother told me kindly, “But we don’t eat those foods; it is not our custom.” Over the years, I’ve encountered similar comments while working as a dietitian, managing public health programs, and teaching in several universities. Observing widely varied eating habits has led me to focus on universal principles of nutrition and health that transcend cultural differences—principles reflected in the Word of

Wisdom as found in Doctrine and Covenants 89. Using these basic principles to guide our food choices will surely bring the blessing of physical well-being.

My experience has also taught me that our attitudes and actions related to food have an impact on our spiritual well-being. If we are watchful in our approach to eating, we will see opportunities to apply the principles of service, gratitude, and wise judgment.

Choosing Healthy Foods

When the Savior appeared as a resurrected being to His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, they were discouraged because they had caught no fish. “And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (John 21:6).

Making healthy food choices might be described as casting our nets on the right side of the ship. If we “fish” for healthy foods listed in the Word of Wisdom—fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, and meats sparingly (see D&C 89:10–17)—we are selecting from those things the Lord “made to be used, with judgment” (D&C 59:20). On the other hand, looking for nourishment in unhealthy snacks, candy, and sugary beverages is like fishing on the wrong side of the ship.

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“The restored gospel teaches that there is an intimate link between body, mind, and spirit. In the Word of Wisdom, for example, the spiritual and physical are intertwined. When we follow the Lord’s law of health for our bodies, we are also promised wisdom to our spirits and knowledge to our minds (see D&C 89:19–21). The spiritual and physical truly are linked.”

Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women general president, “The Sanctity of the Body,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 15.

Providing Healthy Options

One study has shown that although religious people tend to smoke and drink less, to live longer, and to be happier than the general population, they also tend to be more overweight.¹ Those who attended church regularly were more than twice as likely to become obese. One contributing factor may be that food often plays a major role in church-sponsored social gatherings.

As Latter-day Saints, we can adjust our food choices and encourage others to observe good nutritional practices by providing healthy options. Consider the following suggestions:

- Young Men, Young Women, and Primary leaders can provide healthy foods for the refreshments as well as encourage activities that include wholesome exercise. We can have fun without overindulgence.
- Visiting teachers might go for a walk with a sister so that all can enjoy more physical activity.
- When appropriate, we can take healthy foods to those we visit.



At your next social or ward dinner, challenge yourself to remember healthy alternatives. Do a favor for those who are trying to develop healthier eating habits and make the menu both colorful and healthy. Remember that the healthiest desserts are fruits and the healthiest snacks are vegetables.

Offering Service

Each time we share a meal, we are given the opportunity to adjust our lives to be more in line with principles of the gospel.

The account of the disciples casting their nets on the right side of the ship teaches another powerful lesson: that preparing food for others can build bonds of fellowship and love. After catching their fish, the disciples came ashore, where the Savior had built a fire. The Lord provided them with some cooked fish and some bread. (See John 21:8–13.) He took the time to offer His disciples physical nourishment before He implored Peter, and by extension all of the disciples, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16).

By preparing food for His friends, the Savior demonstrated that He cared deeply for both their spiritual and their temporal welfare. Through a simple meal, He set an example of sincere and loving service that we can follow at our own mealtimes and any time we are called to minister.

Expressing Gratitude

Mealtime also creates a regular opportunity to express gratitude. As a child, when our family said a prayer on the food, I thought we were praying to make sure the food would not make us sick. Now I realize

that asking for a blessing on our meals reminds us to be grateful for all the blessings we receive.

Similarly, fasting provides a unique opportunity to show gratitude. We learn compassion as we gain insight into the experiences of those who may suffer from hunger. We also serve those in need directly through fast offerings. Fasting and fast offerings are both a symbolic and a literal way to serve God and to help those in need.

Exercising Wise Judgment

In societies where excesses are the norm, we need to apply wise judgment and moderation. Moderation means restraint within reasonable limits and refraining from excess

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(see D&C 59:20). We can exercise moderation when deciding how much and how often we need to eat and by resisting media messages that encourage unwise eating habits that can bring unwanted health risks.

Another way to show moderation is to avoid trying to fill emotional emptiness with food. Sometimes we turn to food when we are lonely, grieving, or bored. Unfortunately, the food doesn't meet the emotional need; it is a substitute for a true solution. A better approach is to fill our emotional hunger through service to others.

Moderation doesn't mean *never* enjoying dessert; nor does it mean we must eliminate even occasional treats. It simply means we should use good judgment.

Blessings of Abundance

Since the Lord has provided us with "the good things which come of the earth" (D&C 59:17), let us nourish our bodies with good, nutritious foods. And as we partake, let us find opportunities to nourish our spirits by applying the principles of service, gratitude, and wise



ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What is the relationship between our bodies and our spirits?

We are dual beings. Each soul is comprised of body and spirit [see D&C 88:15], both of which emanate from God. A firm understanding of body and spirit will shape our thoughts and deeds for good. . . .

"Your body, whatever its natural gifts, is a magnificent creation of God. It is a tabernacle of flesh—a temple for your spirit [see 1 Corinthians 6:19]. . . .

"Development of the spirit is of eternal consequence. The attributes by which we shall be judged one day are those of the spirit. These include the virtues of integrity, compassion, love, and more. Your spirit, by being housed in your body, is able to develop and express these attributes in ways that are vital to your eternal progression [see 2 Nephi 2:11–16, 21–26; Moroni 10:33–34].

"Spirit and body, when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. Indeed, we are children of God—physically and spiritually."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "We Are Children of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 85, 86.

judgment. As we offer food with love, receive it with thanksgiving, enjoy it in moderation, and use it with judgment, great blessings of abundance, physical as well as spiritual, will be ours (see D&C 59:15–19). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. See Matthew Feinstein, Kiang Liu, Hongyan Ning, George Fitchett, and Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, "Incident Obesity and Cardiovascular Risk Factors between Young Adulthood and Middle Age by Religious Involvement: The Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) Study," *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 54, no. 2 (February 2012), 117–21.