

and increase their fast offerings when they are able and thus enable the Church to do more.

Reach beyond the Church

As far as person-to-person assistance is concerned, the greatest compassionate service each of us can give may be in our own neighborhoods and communities. Wherever we live in the world there is pain and sorrow all around us. We need to take more initiative as individuals in deciding how we can best be of service.

The fact that a particular activity is not sponsored by the Church does not mean it is not worthy of a Church member's support. As individuals, we should become knowledgeable of the opportunities around us. I fear some members suffer from action paralysis, waiting for the Church to put its stamp of approval on one organization or another. The Church teaches principles. Use those principles and the Spirit to decide which organizations you would like to support.

The Lord said, "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will" (D&C 58:27). Good things can be done through the Church organization, community organizations, and very often through no formal organization at all.

We must reach out beyond the walls of our own church. In humanitar-

ian work, as in other areas of the gospel, we cannot become the salt of the earth if we stay in one lump in the cultural halls of our beautiful meetinghouses. We need not wait for a call or an assignment from a Church leader before we become involved in activities that are best carried out on a community or individual basis.

When we get emotionally and spiritually involved in helping a person who is in pain, a compassion enters our heart. It hurts, but the process lifts some of the pain from another. We get from the experience a finite look into the Savior's pain as He performed the infinite atonement. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, a sanctification takes place within our souls and we become more like our Savior. We gain a better understanding of what was meant when He said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

As the last days unfold, we will see all the prophecies fulfilled. We will see today's problems compounded, and we will see new challenges scarcely imaginable at this time. We must reach out to those who are suffering from these events. We must not become fatalistic or judgmental—even if we warn the people in the world of something a thousand times and they heed us not. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Eduardo Ayala

Dear brothers and sisters, throughout my life I have known men and women who keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence and joy and who have, through their examples, edified and blessed the lives of those around them. Some of them now occupy prominent, challenging positions in their personal and professional lives. In the midst of their success, they are not afraid of recognizing that they are

where they are because of the blessings of the Lord.

A faithful physician

Allow me to share the experience of a faithful member of the Church who occupies a prominent position among the world's microneurosurgeons. This is a position he has obtained, according to his own testimony, with the help of the Lord and through obedience to the Word of Wisdom. He joined the Church

at an early age and promised himself to faithfully live the commandments. As the years went by, he had the opportunity of fulfilling two of his great goals—the opportunity to pursue a university education and to marry the woman of his dreams.

During this period of time something happened that totally changed the course of his life. One of his daughters became seriously ill with a brain disease which ultimately took her life. None of the efforts made in her behalf was sufficient to save her. During this frustrating and painful experience, which happened while he was a medical student at the university, he set a new and challenging goal, that of becoming a neurosurgeon. The fact that his daughter had suffered and died through a brain disease awakened in him the desire to study microneurosurgery, schooling that would be long and difficult.

Microneurosurgery requires, among other things, a great deal of physical discipline and dexterity. At this point in his life, while he was pursuing his studies, he discovered the blessings that come through obedience to the Word of Wisdom. He asked the Lord in humility and love that the promises contained in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants would be made manifest in him so he could bless the lives of those who would depend on his skill.

During those difficult learning years, he worked untiringly to become the best in his area of specialization. As the years went by, he gained great dexterity in his hands and mastered the art and the skill necessary to work on the human brain. As we can imagine, any physical slip or unsteadiness in his hands could cause damage to his patients, perhaps injuring them for life.

Blessings of the Word of Wisdom

As he studied section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, he obtained a strong testimony that when we refrain from taking into our bodies substances that are harmful to it, we are blessed

with intelligence and a healthy and strong body. As a doctor, he knew that these promises were there, within his reach, and he had earnestly sought them in his own behalf.

As the time arrived for his proficiency exam, the final exam in his chosen career, he prepared himself with great care in order to perform to his very best and to demonstrate to the examining doctors the skills he had acquired. The day prior to the examination, he noticed some heavy trembling in his normally skillful hands, and in humility he prayed to the Lord, asking Him to make his hands firm and sure as they had always been to this point. The following day, he discovered with great alarm that there were unsure movements in his hands. He went off to a solitary spot, and, in deep meditation, he mentally searched for any sin he may have committed that would cause him to experience this problem. But in his search, he found nothing that might be contrary to the Word of Wisdom. Then he thought, I need these promises to come to me now, and he prayed to our Father in Heaven with all his heart that His guidance and protection would be with him.

The time came to perform brain surgery on his patient, and when the doctor saw his hands through the microscope, he noted with great emotion that his prayer had been heard and that his hands were steadier than they had ever been.

He felt a great surge of gratitude, and his sure and skillful hands flew in their activity, healing the damaged brain of his patient. The blessings and the promises of the Word of Wisdom were with him, and he was able to carry out this difficult surgery in an hour less than the normal expectation. It was a complete success, and he humbly accepted congratulations from the examining physicians. With gratitude in his heart for the success he had achieved, he returned to his home, and there, with his family, he reviewed the promises of the Lord that “all saints who remember

to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, 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).

Today as he visits some of the famous clinics and hospitals, and his colleagues have the opportunity of listening to him, he expresses to them and to members of the press, “First, I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and then I am a microneurosurgeon.” Not all prominent men achieve the humility to be able to recognize the blessings of the Lord in their lives, which are the result of obedience to the commandments, as this good member of the Church has done.

A commandment for today

Without question, the Word of Wisdom is one of the commandments which we most need to obey in these days, due to the great quantity of stimulants and drugs that have weakened the lives of those individuals who ignore the marvelous promises that the Lord has made to men if they will avoid using these harmful substances.

This commandment is very important today. As an example of the power of the Word of Wisdom, I quote another verse from section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord said, “And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man” (D&C 89:8). The Prophet Joseph Smith received this revelation in February of 1833, and it has been the cause of many controversies. Perhaps in that early period it was only significant to the faithful members of the Church, but now medical doctors have come to recognize that tobacco, in addition to being addictive, also kills those who use it. Used to any degree, tobacco has been

the cause of so much damage among mankind that the need to carry out great campaigns against its use cannot be avoided.

How I wish that each of us could have a strong testimony of the Word of Wisdom and that we could share with others the results of its sacred promises so that our future generations can be healthy and intelligent, and so our families and nations can be strengthened. In this way, we can become worthy of the final promise of the Lord as contained in this section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:21). When we humbly recognize and fully accept the counsel of the Lord, nothing will be able to hold back man’s intelligence.

The living prophets constantly teach us about these sacred principles, but men seem to mock them even as they are being undermined and destroyed by those harmful substances which not only destroy the body and the mind, but also the spirit. Our clinics and hospitals are full of these people, and yet men still resist the word of the Lord and refuse to recognize the wisdom that lies therein.

I pray for those who can still be saved and for those who have now accepted the counsels of the Lord and have separated themselves from those things that could cause their destruction.

I earnestly desire that we will accept the wisdom of this word of warning, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy have spoken to us. I may say that Brother Ayala has been a true and valiant and tremendous servant of the Lord in South America. I wish I could