

Health and Healing **Temperance**

Lesson #9 for May 29, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 9:20-27; Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-7; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 10:31; 2 Timothy 5:23; 2 Peter 1:5-9.

1. This lesson focuses on the old-fashioned word *temperance* which should more correctly be translated *self-control* with all of its implications. The ancient Greek philosopher Xenophon (ca. 400 B.C.) said *self-control* means, "Moderation in all things healthful; total abstinence from all things harmful." Ellen G. White stated, "True temperance [self-control] teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is helpful."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 562.
2. Many stories could be told of famous, important, even well-educated men and women whose lives have been ruined by drugs, alcohol, and intemperance of various kinds. Even too much water can kill a person!
3. Why does our world seem to revel in excess? We have become an obese nation! Does that have any impact on our relationship with God? Does the Devil have some reason for promoting excess?
4. We are all aware that the mind is an incredibly complex and sophisticated organ. Very subtle amounts of certain chemicals can impact it in an enormous way.
5. Read Matthew 5:16; John 2:19; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; and 1 Peter 4:11. What kinds of actions on our part would lead others to praise God? How can we do everything we do in such a way as to bring glory to God? Is it that we are to give God credit for whatever we accomplish? Is that what is suggested by doing it "in the name of Jesus"?
6. Temperance or self-control is often regarded as the opposite to excess or addiction. What are the implications of calling something an addiction? Is that to imply that a small amount is okay but larger and more frequent use is dangerous? Addiction implies a loss of control. How many addictions can you name that have an impact on modern society? Drugs, alcohol, food, exercise, money, the internet, sex, work, sleep, etc. Could even Bible reading or religion become an addiction? The Spirit leads to self-control. Allowing anything in our environment to control us will eventually allow the Devil to control us.
7. How are we supposed to develop self-control? Is this a case of gritting your teeth and bearing it? What is your understanding of Galatians 5:22,23 where the final part listed of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control? Does this imply that when we have fully received the Holy Spirit, self-control will come naturally? Many people pray for control by the Holy Spirit. Then, how could a part of the fruit of the Spirit be self-control? Is self-control ultimately a gift from God? Or merely self-discipline? Or is it a product of our cooperation with God? Does the Spirit teach us self-control?
8. Would you agree with this definition: "Temperance includes not only abstaining from what is harmful but also actively pursuing the development of positive habits and harmonious balance in all that is good for our health." *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* p. 103.
9. When you mention the word *temperance*, many people think immediately of abstinence from alcohol. In the 21st century, alcohol is a growing menace. An estimated 1.8 million deaths per year in the United States are a direct or indirect result of alcohol consumption. And that consumption is rising steadily. Binge drinking—the consumption of 4 to 5 successive drinks in males or 3 to 4 successive drinks in females—is growing alarmingly quickly among adolescents and young adults.
10. If you have read the Bible carefully, you are familiar with the story of Noah. (Genesis 6-9)

Overall, Noah's life was an exemplary one. (Genesis 6:9,22; 7:1) He preached righteousness. He did God's will and was known for doing right despite overwhelming odds. How much conviction did it take to continue building a boat that appeared to be completely unnecessary for 120 years while he preaching to an unresponsive audience? Would you have believed Noah? The scientists said rain was impossible! **When we tell people that this world is going to be destroyed and Jesus is coming, aren't we sounding as crazy as Noah did?**

11. But after the flood was over, Noah's story changed. Was it because the Devil and all his angels had only eight people to work on? Read Genesis 9:20-27. What do you think was happening in this story? Did Noah look at the world around him, compare it to what was before the flood, and drink to forget his misery? Did Noah become a habitual drinker? When he drank that fermented grape juice, did he have any idea that it would impact him in that way? Was the drinking an accidental occurrence? Is there any evidence that it was repeated? Would it be fair to call Noah a drunkard?
12. What instruction do we get from the Bible about the use of alcohol? (Judges 13:2-8; Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-35, 30:4-7; Isaiah 5:11; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Ephesians 5:18; Deuteronomy 14:22-27; 1 Timothy 5:23) In these verses we see an entire panorama of commentary on the use of alcohol. Samson's mother was told to avoid alcohol completely while she was pregnant with him, and he was to avoid alcohol throughout his life. Solomon either observed or personally experienced the dangers of wine as presented in the verses in Proverbs. Isaiah mentioned that in his day, priests and judges were being corrupted by the use of alcohol. While Paul advised us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and not alcoholic spirits, he also advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. That undoubtedly was referring to the pure juice of the grape and not to the fermented variety. How should we relate to 1 Corinthians 5:11 which suggests we should not even associate with believers or those who claim to be believers who are slanderers, drunkards, immoral, greedy, or thieves? Should we use the "tithe" to buy strong drink? Alcohol was probably the only pain reliever they had available.
13. Do you know stories of people who have ruined their lives by the use of alcohol? What about people who have been church leaders or respected leaders in other professions?
14. Alcohol has become an accepted practice in most societies in our day. Is this one of the Devil's traps?
15. While we may think that drinking alcohol impacts only the drinker himself, that would be a terrible error. All of us are aware of times when alcohol consumption by a single individual has had terrible consequences for others. Automobile accidents, murders, spousal abuse, child abuse, etc. have resulted from alcohol consumption.
16. Is the idea of temperance now outmoded? Is it a focus only on things that we are against? The biblical word for *temperance* or *self-control* as used for example in 1 Corinthians 9:25 suggests a careful balance in our lifestyle. Champion athletes must carefully balance their training, their rest, their exercises, etc. to maintain the best possible health.
17. Christians who are working toward an imperishable "gold medal" called eternal life should certainly be as vigilant in their training.
18. "But isn't alcohol good for the heart?" In the early 1970s, a scientific article came out of France suggesting that alcohol improves heart health. A great deal has been made of that article and follow-up studies from that day until this. The alcohol and beverage industry has been doing everything possible to keep this original impression in the public's view. What is the truth from that study? Let us notice several important factors:
 - 1) This study was done on middle-aged and older individuals, and no research to date has shown any evidence of any kind of benefit to the young.
 - 2) Subsequent scientific studies have challenged the conclusions from that first study. There were a number of problems that have been discovered in that original study:

- a) A number of individuals who were included in the “non-drinking” group in that first study were actually former alcohol drinkers who had since quit. Some of those had even stopped drinking because of alcohol-related health problems. A review of the details showed that the so-called control group of “non-drinkers” were in worse health than the “moderate drinkers” who were part of the study.
 - b) Repeat analysis of the data correcting for those mistakes in study design showed no demonstrable heart benefits of moderate drinking compared to the non-drinkers. Thus, the whole conclusion of the original study was invalidated.
 - c) Further study showed that the moderate-drinking group had better diets, exercised more regularly, and were of a higher socio-economic bracket, thus having better access to healthcare than the “non-drinkers.” The French also eat more fruits and vegetables and consume two to three times more fiber than others. Unfortunately, the French are rapidly losing this advantage by adopting a more “American” diet. All of those factors would definitely impact the health and longevity of the “moderate drinkers.” Thus, it seems clear that the benefits which were attributed to moderate-alcohol drinking were, in fact, due to other lifestyle practices.
 - d) Other studies that have been done on this “French effect” have found that a very small amount of alcohol—a half a glass of wine in women or a full glass in men—eaten with meals slowly does seem to raise HDL (good cholesterol) levels and may have a small benefit to the heart and a small decrease in overall mortality compared to those who practice all of the same health habits and do not drink any alcohol. In red grapes there is a substance called resveratrol that might be the cause.
 - e) Of course, this says nothing about what alcohol does to your brain and to your liver where alcohol is undoubtedly damaging.
19. It has been demonstrated again and again that 7% of people who take their first drink will end up as either problem-drinkers or alcoholics. At this point in time, we have no way of predicting who will be affected that way. Thus, should any thinking Christian play a kind of Russian roulette with his life? Why don't we hear about the temperance society in our churches these days?
 20. We all know that even small amounts of alcohol impair our ability to make rapid decisions and also to respond to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. All of us have probably seen people who have made fools of themselves or even worse through their use of alcohol.
 21. It seems clear from what we have studied so far that there are two parts to the biblical principle of self-control. We should abstain from harmful substances, and we should maintain a careful balance in the use of those things which are helpful. God is guiding us so that we can be in complete control of our lives.
 22. Read 2 Peter 1:5-9. These verses are sometimes referred to as Peter's ladder. In what way do these things build on each other? How does faith lead to goodness? How does goodness lead to a knowledge of God? How does a knowledge of God promote self-control? How does self-control lead to endurance? How does endurance lead us to godliness? How does godliness, in turn, lead to Christian affection and finally to love?
 23. Since our study this week is on temperance or self-control, how specifically does a correct knowledge of God lead to self-control? Does understanding God and His character or, even better, learning to think of God as our Friend lead us to be balanced in our work, sleep, diet, internet use, sunlight exposure, exercise, use of money, and our sex lives? Can you think of other aspects of our lives which can become out of control and thus, become a kind of addiction? Don't we believe that God wants only what is best for us? Would God want us to use damaging chemicals in our bodies?
 24. It is useful to understand how alcohol is produced. A food product that is high in carbohydrate

is usually mashed or mixed up into a liquid sort of mush, and then a type of yeast is added. The yeast organisms immediately begin to consume the carbohydrate available and the waste product that they produce is alcohol. When they have consumed virtually all of the carbohydrate and the alcohol content reaches between 5% and 7%, the organisms die. The alcohol “waste” is then separated from the other material and turned into various kinds of drink. Beer (4-7% alcohol) and wine (up to 11%-fermented and up to 22%-fortified) are produced naturally. Anything with an alcohol content more than 11% must be distilled in one way or another, reducing the water content and thus, leaving a higher alcohol content. Sometimes, the left over yeast which is then dead is turned into a vitamin-like substance called brewer's yeast. So, to summarize the process, brewers take good food, add a living organism which consumes all the good food content producing a lot of waste, then remove the organisms, and sell the waste product to consumers!

25. In conclusion, we need to review several important points. If we believe that we were created by God and when we fell into sin were redeemed and bought back by Him through the costly life and death of Jesus Christ, how could we ever suggest that our bodies belong to us and that we can do with them as we please? That is so wrong!
26. Jesus Himself referred to His body as a temple. (John 2:19-21) Paul repeatedly referred to our bodies as temples of God. (1 Corinthians 6:19,20) If our bodies are intended to be a dwelling place for Deity, then we should certainly avoid any selfish misuse of these bodies! God is pleading with us to exercise self-control and to practice loving, responsible behavior so that our bodies may be used not only for our own benefit but for the benefit of others around us.
27. In what ways can we use our bodies to the glory of God? Certainly, an intemperate, health-destroying abuse of our bodies does not please or bring praise or glory to God.
28. God always advises us to do what is best. Don't we believe that the One who designed our bodies knows what is best for them? True Christians understand that they should eat and drink to sustain life, and life is not just for the enjoyment of eating and drinking! One fitness guru said, “If it is manmade, don't eat it. If it tastes good, spit it out!”
29. There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers. The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body.—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 398.

Someday, those Christians who are still alive will face the Devil. He will be so persuasive that the “whole world” will follow him. (Revelation 13) He knows ways to manipulate the environment so that he will be able to manipulate us if we are controlled by anything in our environment. That is demon possession!

30. To those who have adopted the larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing model of the plan of salvation, it should be clear that the Devil is doing everything he possibly can to destroy our relationship with our loving heavenly Father. In our day, it is not just food and drink but music, the internet, drugs, etc. that lead to addictions. The Devil, who may fail to get to us through one addiction, is always ready to try another form of addiction. How important is it for us to maintain a constant and very close relationship with the God who wants only the best for us?
31. When we reach heaven, we will not even want to do anything that is wrong. Therefore, we will be able to do anything we want to do! Isn't that the ultimate self-control?

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