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Preface

Why You Need This Book

Healthy choices lead to healthier lives: choose to live.

A list of the 100 confirmed oldest people in modern times in the world ranges from 113 to 122 years.¹ Only six of these supercentenarians were still alive at the beginning of 2014, but many others can appear in the future. Medicine promises to increase considerably human life expectancy during the next decades. Until then, you can do your own part to live longer and better. While research on twins suggests that 20 to 30 percent of a person’s life span is related to genetics, many other studies have shown that longevity depends greatly on lifestyle.²

Modern medicine has created sophisticated techniques to improve human health. Yet nobody who knows the figures can say that the war has been won. Seeking health is a daily challenge for every government and each person. If you like numbers, here are a few facts:

- The estimated global health-care services market for 2015 is $3 trillion, which makes the health-care industry one of the largest sectors of the world economy. In most developed countries health care consumes more than 10 percent of the gross domestic product.
- The global pharmaceuticals market is worth more than $300 billion a year. The 10 largest drug companies (six based in the United States and four in Europe) have sales of more than $10 billion a year and profit margins of about 30 percent. On the other hand, the cost to develop a single drug may surpass $1.3 billion.³
- Worldwide, according to the World Health Organization, in 2006 there were more than 59 million health workers, including 9.2 million physicians, 19.4 million nurses and midwives, 1.9 million dentists and other dentistry personnel, 2.6 million pharmacists and other pharmaceutical personnel, and more than 1.3 million community health staffers. Those numbers would be
even larger today. However, even then there was a shortage of more than 4 million physicians, nurses, midwives, and others.\textsuperscript{4}

- Unnecessary suffering is still a grave problem in the world, for only one in 10 of those who need palliative care, including pain relief, currently receive it.\textsuperscript{5}

- Just in the United States alone, according to a study from Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, it is estimated that the health industry must create 5.6 million new jobs by 2020 to meet the growing demand.\textsuperscript{6}

- One big challenge today is the aging of society. The global population is getting older. It has been predicted that by 2050 the percentage of people more than 60 years of age will increase from 21 percent today to 32 percent in developed countries and from 8 percent to 20 percent in less-developed nations.\textsuperscript{7}

Health is the dream of poor and rich alike. “When I was an intern at Johns Hopkins,” Dr. Ben Carson, a famous neurosurgeon, reports, “I was very impressed by the caliber of patients that I saw on the wards. There were many heads of state, royalty, and heads of many large organizations. Many of them were dying of horrible diseases and would gladly have given every title and every penny for a clean bill of health. This really puts into perspective the things that are truly important in life.”

In fact, without health most other things are not that important. For this reason we need to pay a great deal of attention to the maintenance of good health and not just become concerned when something threatens it. And when we talk about health, we must think not only of its physical dimension, but also of its mental and spiritual facets. Our duty is to optimize all three of these aspects in our own lives and in the lives of everyone else in the world. “As a physician, I have frequently been able to witness the joy associated with restored physical and emotional health,” Dr. Carson reveals, “but this is minor compared to the potentially everlasting joy associated with spiritual health.”

The world has become such a complex, dangerous, and sick place that making good choices is more important than ever. To minimize or prevent problems is the best strategy to have a safer and more fulfilling life. Here enters the message of this book, whose aim is to help people improve their quality of life.
Most likely you have begun reading this book because you desire to live a longer, healthier, and happier life. That is a noble goal, because you have been made to live forever. If you follow the principles and tips presented here, this dream may come true. You deserve to live well and be happy.

Furthermore, we are much more valuable than may appear at a casual glance. Take the human body, for example. When researchers add up the chemical value of our body’s component parts, they might conclude that we are not worth much. Yet even then Wired magazine estimates that if we consider the monetary value of our hearts, lungs, kidneys, DNA, and bone marrow, we are individually worth up to a whopping $45 million.

As a rational, thinking, living human being with the enormous capacity to love and experience life’s greatest joys, you are even more valuable than $45 million, and that is what this book is all about. You are embarking on a journey of discovery that has the potential to be life-changing. The principles of better living and the practical lifestyle suggestions you will discover in every chapter can make a real difference in the quality of your life. You can live life to the fullest and discover joy to the max.

As you scan these pages and consider your personal health, you will recognize that to achieve life’s greatest happiness you will probably need to make some positive steps. But rather than overwhelming yourself with multiple changes, choose to begin by taking a few small steps at first. For example, as you succeed in increasing your exercise, or reducing the amount of sugar and refined foods in your diet or getting more rest, your resolve will increase, and your ability to make healthy choices will become stronger.

Good health is a state that we all desire, but sadly, many people realize its worth and value only once they’ve lost it! Here is an opportunity for you to evaluate your health and lifestyle carefully, not just hastily make a few resolutions that rapidly fly out the window. Do you feel that you’re getting the best out of life in all its facets? Have you recently assessed your total health, including its physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects?

You may assume that you manage your day-to-day routines of
eating, working, and sleeping quite well. But are you enjoying a real quality of life? Have you ever considered that life may have much more to it than you are currently experiencing?

Medical Progress

During the twentieth century medical science made great strides toward increased good health as its understanding of physiology and disease processes grew. Public health measures that improved sanitation, sewage disposal, and the delivery of clean water to communities positively affected both the quality and longevity of life for millions. The development of vaccinations and immunizations—one of the most cost-effective ways of preventing infectious diseases—eradicated smallpox toward the end of the twentieth century and greatly decreased the ravages of polio and diphtheria. Reported cases of measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, and diphtheria have plummeted about 90 percent because of immunizations.

Infectious and communicable diseases—those spread by bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites (for example, tuberculosis, malaria, and hepatitis)—continue to cause significant problems worldwide. And HIV and AIDS claimed the lives of an estimated 1.7 million people in 2011 alone. Yet we cannot underestimate the tremendous strides in health care.

Unfortunately, such advances in medicine also have another side to them. As world governments and public health experts focused on treating, controlling, or eliminating infectious (or communicable) diseases, noncommunicable or lifestyle ones skyrocketed. Today such noncommunicable diseases have become entrenched in all societies of the world—developed and emerging economies, affluent and poor. They are mainly lifestyle-related and pose a huge threat to our health, happiness, and longevity. It is highly likely that someone close to you has died because of cancer, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases.

What Is Your Health Issue?

You may be feeling good up to now because you do not smoke tobacco or drink alcohol, but what about your diet and salt intake?
The foods we choose to eat largely produce the various noncommunicable diseases. At least 40 percent of all deaths from these kinds of diseases result from the consumption of foods high in saturated and trans fats, salt, and sugar (and refined carbohydrates). Are you selecting your foods wisely and carefully, focusing on variety and good nutrition within the bounds of your budget? Simple actions such as cutting back on salt, reducing food portion sizes, and eating more fruits and vegetables can make a huge difference to your health. If you are into junk foods, irregular meals, excessive salt, large amounts of fat, a highly refined food diet, or large portions, know that life can be much better, and that’s why this book is just for you.

Of course, to enjoy the best health possible you should be exercising daily. You might say, “I get up off the couch for a snack during every TV commercial, and I walk the 100 feet from the closest parking spot to the grocery store.” But do you have a regularly planned, systematic exercise program?

Health professionals encourage us to walk 10,000 steps daily! We should be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in order for our wonderful body to function at its best. So if you’re groaning that you’re too busy to exercise, but really want to begin a practical, sustainable exercise program, keep reading.

What about your interpersonal relationships? Do you have friends you care about, younger people you mentor, individuals in need whom you help? Social support and connectedness to God and others are also health-giving! Perhaps you have broken relationships in your life that need mending. Keep reading. God has a plan for you that is far better than you can ever imagine.

Are you happy? Do you wake up with purpose, walk with “pep in your step,” and have a smile on your face? Or has life become too much? Are you anxious or downhearted? Does the future look bleak? Do you struggle with dark thoughts of meaninglessness, failure, and defeat? As we explore scientific facts and discover life-changing principles of the Bible that we can universally apply, you will see that the possibility of happiness is real.

We can almost guarantee that disappointment, heartache, and trials will afflict our lives at times, because we dwell in a sin-filled
world. But God is bigger than our trials, greater than our difficulties, and larger than our challenges. We may be weak, but He is strong. God is our assurance when we face uncertainty. Should guilt threaten to overwhelm us, He can be our peace. He is our wisdom when we find ourselves perplexed. When we are imprisoned in the chains of seemingly unbreakable habits, He stands ready to offer supernatural power to free us. And when we are lonely, He is forever near.

Thus, whenever we face paralyzing anxiety and overwhelming fear, God’s words still speak to our hearts: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, NKJV). Should the burdens of life appear insurmountable, He urges us to cast “all of our care upon Him, for He cares” for us (1 Peter 5:7, NKJV). And when the future seems uncertain, He reminds us: “Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV).

In God we will find rest and hope for the future. Our loving heavenly Father has given us a road map and instructions on how to have health and wellness—now and beyond, and even into eternity! We were born for something much more than just struggling through a few decades and then dying. God intended for us to live the abundant life today, tomorrow, and forever.

The Lord has a plan for your life that is far more than amazing. As His personal concern, He wants you to live life in all of its fullness. He longs that you experience joy beyond measure. In fact, Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV). Heaven’s plan for you is a life of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wholeness.

Each chapter in this book is an adventure into really living. As you put their principles into practice, you will notice positive changes in your life. Some of the benefits of your healthful choices will be almost immediate, but most of them will come gradually. Don’t become discouraged or give up too quickly. Continue to make positive lifestyle choices, and in time you will be astounded with what is happening in your life.

A loving God made us with the power of choice. Our wills, the
governing power deep within our nature that enables us to choose the way we think, the physical habits we develop, and the spiritual decisions we make, are a powerful force in lifestyle transformation. Current medical research is leaning more and more in the direction that, although our genetics do play a role in determining the state of our well-being and overall health, choice is a much more influential and important factor. Our health is not simply a matter of chance. It has a great deal to do with our daily decisions.

When we choose to make positive choices, the Holy Spirit comes to our aid to enable us to put those decisions into practice. All of heaven’s power is available to us. Your will may be weakened because of poor choices, but it is never too late to begin to make healthy ones. You can take charge of your life and health. Change always begins with choice, and it occurs when we realize we are not mere victims of chance, but have the freedom to take responsibility for our own health and happiness. Those who decide to adopt the suggestions given here will undoubtedly experience a fuller quality and enjoyment of life.

Of course, self-improvement has its limitations. Our biological realities remind us of some insurmountable barriers and define the extent of human accomplishment. But the beauty and value of this book is that it offers more than is humanly attainable. As you read it, you will inevitably realize that you can rely on a gracious higher power. The experience of a spirituality born of a relationship with a loving God can make a huge difference in your life.

While we are finite, God and His grace are infinite. Grace is the power of the omnipotent to grant to the impotent the ability to be whole—all accomplished through the construction of a relationship. As we focus on the whole person—physical, mental, and spiritual—God offers us life full of health and wellness. He rains grace down upon us from heaven, traversing a gulf that we cannot possibly span. Given to the undeserving in incomprehensible love, grace permits the experience of a full and abundant life not only here and now, but also for eternity.

In our earthly life, despite our best efforts and compliance with healthful principles, we cannot escape the lingering shadow of our mortality. But when a human being reaches across the gap between us and God, hope is born! Love rattles the bars of the dungeons of
HEALTH AND WELLNESS

dead. Graves will yet yield to the persuasion of grace. If you desire to improve your health, science can help you. But if you want to live forever, seek the source of immortal life.

1 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_supercentenarians; and www.grg.org/Adams/B3.HTM.