

MAKING POSITIVE LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Books about health are rolling off the presses by the millions. They regularly achieve bestseller status. You may be wondering, Why publish another book on health, and, specifically, Why *this* book? There is a simple answer: I am passionate about sharing the principles in this book because they have kept my husband and me in good health on our busy international teaching and speaking itinerary. As we have shared these lifestyle principles, they have positively affected the lives of tens of thousands around the world for more than forty-five years.

One of the most important factors in achieving optimum health is simply this—make positive health choices. Where do we begin? Making the best possible choices to achieve optimum health necessitates wisdom to live in harmony with nature’s unchangeable laws of life. What is wisdom? Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw said, “We are made wise not by the recollection of the past, but by the responsibility for

our future.” Wisdom is not looking at the possible poor choices we have made in the past. It is taking personal responsibility for our choices today. These choices will influence our lives now and in the future.

Wisdom and knowledge

According to *Merriam-Webster*, wisdom is “knowledge that is gained by having many experiences in life; the natural ability to understand things that most other people cannot understand; knowledge of what is proper or reasonable; good sense or judgment.”¹ Possibly the best definition I found online, though of unknown origin, is, “Wisdom is a disposition to find the truth coupled with an optimum judgment as to what actions should be taken.”

Simply stated, wisdom is an attitude in which an individual seeks to discover the truth about a certain subject for the purpose of implementing it in their decision-making process. Wise people take responsibility.

Wisdom is the ability to use and apply that knowledge. The key is applying the knowledge we acquire.

We cannot completely determine what will happen in the future, but we *can* make lifestyle choices today that will give us the best chance of living the healthiest life possible. What is knowledge? Knowledge is information and understanding about a subject. It is “acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles, as from study or investigation.”²

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? Knowledge has to do with acquiring information. Wisdom goes far beyond knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to use and apply that knowledge. The key is applying the knowledge we acquire. Wisdom leads us to make the right choices. Wisdom and insight are gifts from God. The following Bible passage is helpful: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). As you acquire knowledge, ask God for wisdom to apply that knowledge.

The One who created our bodies longs to give us the wisdom to care for them. Our loving Creator is the source of all wisdom, which we can use to incorporate these health principles into our lives to achieve physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. The Scripture says, “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding” (Proverbs 3:13).

It is important to make right choices regarding our health. If you ask the average person whether they want to be healthy, the answer would probably be a resounding yes. People everywhere want to be healthy. Everyone I know wants boundless energy, a radiant countenance, and abundant health. Most people I meet want to live life in all its fullness. No one wants to be plagued with the diseases that are killing thousands. But a healthy lifestyle requires discipline:

- ▶ It takes discipline to walk thirty minutes a day at least five times a week when you don't feel like exercising.
- ▶ It takes discipline to refuse an extra serving of your favorite food when you know you have already eaten enough.
- ▶ It takes discipline to get out of your comfortable easy chair and go out in the sunshine and fresh air.
- ▶ It takes discipline to go to bed on time when you want to stay up and watch your favorite television program or continue working on your computer.

Commitment and sacrifice

It takes commitment to give up unhealthful habits to achieve optimum health, but anything we “give up” to achieve better health is well worth the sacrifice.

In addition to this passionate desire for health, there seems to be an insatiable yearning for wealth. Many people want to be rich. However, there is certainly something more important than financial wealth. In a very real sense, the old saying that “health is wealth”

is true. Good health, peace of mind, spiritual harmony, and a positive attitude characterize well-being. More often than not, we determine the direction our lives will go, and it's never too late to make positive choices.

My purpose in writing this book is to share the divine wisdom of the ages regarding the health of mind, body, and spirit. When we follow heaven's principles, we can live a longer, healthier, wealthier, happier, more peaceful, and more productive life.

The psalmist declares, "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him" (Psalm 18:30). David says in Psalm 19:7, "The law of the LORD is perfect." It gives us great insights. It is *true*! It guides us in making the best possible choices. When we follow these time-tested health laws and eternal principles of life, we will be on our way to great rewards.

The laws of nature are designed for our good. Obedience to them promotes health and happiness in this life and aids in preparation for the life to come. Sometimes we experience pain, misery, poor health, and financial reverses because we do not follow heaven's principles. What we need most is wisdom to apply them to our lives! In this book, I will present God's wellness plan. The good news is this: it is a divine plan that is available to everyone worldwide.

Of course, there is no magic formula for good health. No "health potion" will create perfect health all the time. Genetic and environmental factors influence our health and well-being. The principles in this book are

scientifically sound, thoroughly researched, well documented, and based on some of the best evidence available. As you choose to put them into practice in your life, they will make a positive difference in your health outcome.

People around the world are dying prematurely. In the developing world, chronic diseases are increasing. The question is, How can we reverse or reduce the killer diseases, and what would it take to increase life expectancy? What price would you pay for eleven more happy, healthy years? Are there principles we can follow that will enable us to live to a healthy hundred years old? A growing body of scientific evidence shows it's possible to live a longer, happier, healthier life. Our health is not a matter of chance. Our lifestyle makes a difference. As author, educator, and nutritionist Barbara O'Neill says, "Genetics loads the gun, but lifestyle pulls the trigger."³

Lifestyle factors

Some of the lifestyle factors that contribute to premature aging are smoking, alcohol, caffeine, drugs, rich food, and inactivity. As a result of poor lifestyle choices, chronic diseases are increasing worldwide.

Do our lifestyle choices make a difference? Some people minimize the importance of choice. They think good health is a mere matter of chance and that they have little control over their health outcome. Are some people just plain lucky because they have the right genes? Luigi Fontana, physician and codirector of the

longevity research program at Washington University in Saint Louis, provides some interesting statistics. According to Fontana’s research, “About 25 percent of your risk of death is due to genetics,” says Shipla Ravella. “Of the remaining 75 percent, diet is likely the most important factor.”⁴

Every day we choose what we eat and drink. We choose whether we exercise. Good health is largely in the hands of each person. We can choose to be healthy by making right lifestyle choices.

Each of our daily choices may either help or harm our health only a little, but when we repeat these choices over months, years, and decades, the consequences—or the rewards—can become major. You may be thinking, *I am young; I can do what I want with my health, and it really doesn’t matter. I can eat or drink what I want and sleep only a few hours a night, and it won’t affect me. I will exercise someday, but not now.*

The truth of the matter is in an old saying: “Sell your health when you are young, and when you are old, you can’t buy it back.” We make choices every day that will contribute to a life of vibrant health and happiness or a life of sickness and misery. God has given every person the power of choice. No one else can make positive choices for you. Only *you* can make the necessary changes in your lifestyle to achieve optimum health.

The power of the will

The power of the will is an important factor

in making right choices. The will is the governing power in our brain that activates our choices. The will prompts our actions and motivates us.

Ellen White details the importance of understanding the function of the will in *The Ministry of Healing*:

The tempted one needs to understand the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man—the power of decision, of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. Desires for goodness and purity are right, so far as they go; but if we stop here, they avail nothing. . . .

God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. . . .

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in the life. . . .

Those who are struggling against the power of appetite should be instructed in the principles of healthful living. . . . While they depend upon divine strength to break the bonds of appetite, they are to co-operate with God by obedience to His laws, both moral and physical.⁵

Choice: The first step

Choice is the first step toward improving our lifestyle. Positive choices bring about



positive results. One distinctive aspect of our humanness is our ability to make rational choices. This God-given capacity to choose lifts us above the animal creation. We are not like animals, which are driven largely by instinct and desire. We are human beings created in the image of God with the ability to make positive lifestyle choices. We are the ones who make the necessary changes in our lives to achieve optimum health. In most cases, as adults, we choose what we eat, what we drink, when we sleep, when we exercise, and whether we get out in nature or live an indoor life. God has given us laws of health, and when we choose to follow them, He promises to bless us.

The advice from the wise man Solomon may lengthen our lives:

My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;
For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.
(Proverbs 3:1, 2)

Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the top ten most influential women in the twentieth century. She served as the First Lady of the United States longer than any other, standing beside her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, for four terms in office (March 1933 to April 1945). She

remained in politics after her husband passed away. In 1999, she was voted into Gallup’s list of the top ten most widely admired people of the twentieth century. Her quotes have inspired millions. Here is one of my favorites on taking responsibility for our actions: “One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words. It is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.”⁶

Our choices make a difference in our lives. Good choices generally produce good results. Poor choices often produce negative results. Poor lifestyle choices inhibit good health. They contribute to chronic ailments, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, and many others. There are scores of people around us each day who are struggling with one or more



of these dreaded diseases. We will discover in the next chapter some vital facts about noncommunicable chronic diseases and how we can reduce and even reverse many of them. But first, let’s pause for a moment to get some “Teenie Tips” on making change.

In each chapter, I will share a section called Teenie Tips. You can immediately put these tips into practice on your journey to wellness.



TEENIE TIPS FOR MAKING CHANGES



 **TIP # 1. Choose to take positive steps** to improve your health.

 **TIP # 2. Determine to be more conscious** of following the natural laws of health, explained in the coming chapters.

 **TIP # 3. Take responsibility for your health choices**, recognizing that the decision to change is up to you.

 **TIP # 4. Make a few positive changes** immediately.

 **TIP # 5. Evaluate the specific areas of your life** that need improvement and determine to address them through your lifestyle.

 **TIP # 6. Set realistic goals.**

 **TIP # 7. Measure your progress.**

 **TIP # 8. Commit to achieving your goals.**

I want you to take away two major messages from this chapter:

- 1** The lifestyle choices we make largely determine our health.
- 2** It is never too late to begin making positive choices.

The choice is yours! The choice is mine! Why not begin making wise lifestyle choices today?

ENDNOTES

1. Merriam-Webster, s.v. “wisdom (*n.*),” English Language Learners Definition of *Wisdom* accessed August 8, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wisdom>.

2. Dictionary.com, s.v. “knowledge (*n.*),” accessed August 8, 2018, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/knowledge>.

3. Barbara O’Neill, “Part 1: DNA and the True Cause of Disease,” YouTube video, 6:55/57:13, lecture in Invercargill, New Zealand, posted October 15, 2017, <https://youtu.be/mbNinxBlgKw>.

4. Shilpa Ravella, “Telomeres, the Key to Longevity, Show Food May Be the Best Anti-Aging Treatment,” Forks Over Knives, February 8, 2017, <https://forksoverknives.com/telomeres.keys-longevity>.

5. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1905), 176, 177.

6. Eleanor Roosevelt, quoted in Tim Kimmel, *Little House on the Freeway* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Press, 1987), 143.