

## Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

### (23) Diet and Health (pages 295-310)

#### Summary:

The theme of this chapter could be “You are what you eat.” Our bodies are built up from the food we eat, so careful selection and timing of the diet is a critical factor in overall health.

#### Thoughts:

The foods chosen should be those that best supply the elements needed for building up the body. Appetite is not a safe guide in this process, but God’s original plan for human diet (in Genesis) is. This consisted of grains, fruits, nuts and vegetables. (295-296)

Not all wholesome foods, however, are suited to our needs in all circumstances. Diet should be suited to the season, the climate and the occupation we follow. What is appropriate for one is not necessarily appropriate for another. (296-297)

In the pages that follow Ellen White gives a number of specific recommendations regarding nuts, fruits, grains (bread), dairy products and sugar. There should not be a great variety at any one meal and meals should be taken at regular times (five or six hours between meals), nothing in between and nothing just before bedtime. (298-304)

The science on many of these is mixed; for example, in some cases five or six small meals a day seems healthier than two or three with nothing in between. But the principle of individuality that is clearly articulated in this chapter is an appropriate caution to taking most or all of this counsel as hard and fast rules. Two meals a day does seem a bit challenging in today’s world.

The chapter closes with a number of detailed suggestions regarding liquids, quantity, speed, attitude while eating, food preparation and Sabbath. On the last page is an important admonition that one cannot be a rule for another. Everyone needs to exercise reason and control and should act from principle. (304-310)

Taken as a whole, Ellen White’s counsels regarding diet are far more balanced than is the use of her counsels. Ministry of Healing provides a counterweight to the focus on detailed rules of eating that arise from unbalanced use of indexes and search engines to mine her writings. We need to keep in mind that she spoke to the times in which she lived. She does not address many issues that we face today (such as abortion and genetically modified foods). If a gene were drawn from a pig and increased grain yields is the grain somehow defiled? Science is needed in the application of her principles today.

In raising the issue of modern scientific verification of her health principles, we should be careful not to put her prophetic mantle to the test in terms of every detail, some of which we may not fully understand. Her prophetic worth is demonstrable in the big things, things like the founding of health care work and Loma Linda, the decentralization of church structure, the worldwide focus on Adventist education. Her big idea in *Ministry of Healing* is healthful living. Science can and should help us with the how. It has become generally recognized that vegetarianism has powerful positive implications both for world hunger (increases protein yield per acre) and for the environment (large-scale animal production increases carbon in the atmosphere). So her big ideas have huge implications for today’s world.

A challenge with regard to Adventist health science is the tendency to manage the evidence so research will end up supporting her specifics. This not only includes highlighting evidence that seems to support but sometimes hiding evidence that seems to contradict. She herself would want us to follow the evidence honestly and openly.

### **Quotable Quotes:**

“Those foods should be chosen that best supply the elements needed for building up the body. In this choice, appetite is not a safe guide.” (295)

“Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing.” (296)

“Often food that can be used with benefit by those engaged in hard physical labor is unsuitable for persons of sedentary pursuits or intense mental application. God has given us an ample variety of healthful foods, and each person should choose from it the things that experience and sound judgment prove to be best suited to his own necessities.” (296-297)

“Persons who have accustomed themselves to a rich, highly stimulating diet have an unnatural taste, and they cannot at once relish food that is plain and simple. . . . But those who persevere in the use of wholesome food will, after a time, find it palatable. Its delicate and delicious flavors will be appreciated, and it will be eaten with greater enjoyment than can be derived from unwholesome dainties.” (298)

“If the food eaten is not relished, the body will not be so well nourished. The food should be carefully chosen and prepared with intelligence and skill.” (300)

“To make food appetizing and at the same time simple and nourishing, requires skill; but it can be done. Cooks should know how to prepare simple food in a simple and healthful manner, and so that it will be found more palatable, as well as more wholesome, because of its simplicity.” (303)

“Regularity in eating is of vital importance. There should be a specified time for each meal. At this time let everyone eat what the system requires and then take nothing more until the next meal.” (303)

“When we lie down to rest, the stomach should have its work all done, that it, as well as the other organs of the body, may enjoy rest.” (304)

“By overeating on the Sabbath, many do more than they think to unfit themselves for receiving the benefit of its sacred opportunities.” (307)

“There are men and women of excellent natural ability who do not accomplish half what they might if they would exercise self-control in the denial of appetite.

“Many writers and speakers fail here. After eating heartily, they give themselves to sedentary occupations, reading, study, or writing, allowing no time for physical exercise. As a consequence the free flow of thought and words is checked. They cannot write or speak with the force and intensity necessary in order to reach the heart; their efforts are tame and fruitless.” (308-309)

“A disordered stomach produces a disordered, uncertain state of mind. Often it causes irritability, harshness, or injustice. Many a plan that would have been a blessing to the world has been set aside, many unjust, oppressive, even cruel measures have been carried, as the result of diseased conditions due to wrong habits of eating.” (310)

“Some wish that an exact rule could be prescribed for their diet. They overeat, and then

regret it, and so they keep thinking about what they eat and drink. This is not as it should be. One person cannot lay down an exact rule for another. Everyone should exercise reason and self-control, and should act from principle.” (310)

**Tweets of Healing:**

You are what you eat. (295)

Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. (296)

Not all wholesome foods are equally suited to our needs under all circumstances. (296)

(298) Those who persevere in the use of wholesome foods will in time find them palatable.

There is more religion in a good loaf of bread than many people think. (302)

Regularity in eating is of vital importance. (303)

Eat slowly and with cheerfulness. (306)

A disordered stomach produces a disordered mind. (310)

When it comes to diet, one person cannot lay down an exact rule for another. (310)