

Wonderful Bread

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

2 Peter 3:18



Vitamins aren't part of everyone's daily routine, but they certainly are around our house. For me, it all stemmed from the seed planted by my mother who in hindsight was probably more forward thinking than most during her time. For instance, back in the days when kids toted non-insulated paper bag lunches to school, all my classmates ate sandwiches made with Wonder Bread. In contrast, my wheat bread sandwich stood out like a minority in a sea of white people. Moreover, the other lunch bags were graced with cookies and Twinkies but what was my snack? To my chagrin, Corn Nuts or sunflower seeds. But then to my delight, I discovered the other kids loved Corn Nuts, so I was able to barter with them on the playground to obtain more desirable fare.

Furthermore, my family took vitamins, though doctors scorned them and they certainly weren't prevalent on store shelves like they are today. Vitamin C especially, was prevalent around the house, my mother being an avid fan of Linus Pauling. Now decades later, I've not only continued the tradition but also indulged my own curiosity-driven research that has led to a host of daily supplements far exceeding even my mother's zealous standard.

However, these pills aren't cheap and the hassle to dispense our daily allotment (yes, my husband takes them too) begs the question, do they really do anything besides cost time and money? That's hard to answer, for I really don't want to experiment by abstaining from vitamins to see whether or not my health goes down the tubes. Rather, I'm pretty healthy now so I just assume they're beneficial or at least not detrimental (like the saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"). Sure, many doctors believe that additional supplements are a waste of money, but this opinion is by no means unanimous. Therefore, if the health risk is minimal, I'm inclined to lend credence to the research of nutritionists, even if their studies aren't found in the Journal of the American Medical Association. And who's to say that won't change someday? If we compare the gross number of vitamin bottles on store shelves today with that of past generations, the trend supports their ever-increasing acceptance into the mainstream, and on this front I'd prefer to be slightly ahead of the game than behind it.

Even in spite of disagreement about the value of vitamin supplements, there's unilateral agreement among physicians, nutritionists and anyone with a brain that a healthy body needs proper diet and nutrition. And just as God created the human body and also provides food for its health, He also designed the system and provision for human spiritual health. Meaning that a healthy relationship with God requires the kind of nutrition only He can provide, the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ (John 6:33). Because at the moment we draw breath, we're born apart from God and spiritually malnourished, to say the least. And we can't generate our own spiritual sustenance any more than our body can manufacture its own nutrition inside itself. Furthermore, not only is anything sourced in us inadequate, it's offensive to God; our righteousness are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Moreover, just as external food must be ingested before it works to nourish, the Bread of Life, the solution to our spiritual depravity, must be ingested before it works to save. And how we ingest it is through faith, "For by grace are you saved through faith, not of ourselves but by the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)." The spiritually nourished soul is eternally forgiven and cleansed, freed from its debt, transferred from death to life, indwelt by the Spirit, given spiritual gifts and more.

Even so, the spiritually reborn soul continually needs further divine provision found in His Word. Because once born again, we should grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Yet again it's God, not man, who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7) and the grace we receive is always through faith, as Colossians 2:6 instructs, "just as you have received Christ Jesus, keep walking in Him." So what follows the faith that launched our spiritual birth is the faith to grow; as babes we're nourished by the milk of His Word and when mature, solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2). And just as good nutrition must be taken in consistently for good health, a strong spiritual foundation isn't built sporadically, but through the regular intake and metabolism of God's Word.

Still, while receiving His provision occurs daily, maturing is a process that takes time. Years ago, I remember hoping to accelerate my spiritual growth while fervently "cramming" for hours on end. Although intensely studying the Bible was certainly a good thing, my objective at the time was about as realistic as hoping to watch a tree grow. Yet I was forced to understand that growth happens gradually, with time and faithfulness commingled with the providential experiences of life. Whether it's cell-by-cell, thought-by-thought or step-by-step, if we're faithful to lay hold of His provision, He is faithful to put iron in our soul and grow us to maturity, in His time.

Both body and soul need proper nutrition to thrive, and though a physical health is desirable, spiritual health is better. For no matter how robust any body seems now, its destiny is sealed, to wear down and ultimately cease. On the other hand, the immaterial spirit need never languish; in fact unlike these earthen vessels, the nourished spiritual treasure contained within them should burn brighter and stronger with time.

Nonetheless, caring for our bodies is an aspect of wise stewardship. And though numerous vitamins exist, among them are a special group known as the essentials that no body can lack and still function properly. But again, surpassing these vital nutrients are the essentials to spiritual health:

Vitamin A is needed by the eye's retina, but only the spiritual sight He gives frees us from eternal darkness (Acts 26:18)

Vitamin B's (B₁, B₂, B₃, B₅, B₆, B₉, B₁₂) are necessary for cell metabolism and brain function, but only the Mind of Christ assimilated gives wisdom and spiritual understanding (1 Corinthians 2:10-16)

Vitamin C is required to heal wounds and make collagen, but only His stripes can heal the soul and make peace with God (Isaiah 53:5)

Vitamin D, needed for strong bones and teeth, is produced by exposure to sunlight, but only the Son is the light of the world, and gives both life and light (John 8:12)

Vitamin E affords protection from free radicals that cause diseases such as cancer, but only the Shield of Faith protects us from the arrows of evil (Ephesians 6:16)

Vitamin H (Biotin) is required for hair growth and cellular energy, but only He knows the number of our hairs, and also gives mighty spiritual power (Ephesians 1:19)

Vitamin K is needed for proper blood clotting, but only His blood cleanses us from sin and all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)

Wonder Bread's famous claim was that it "helps build strong bodies 12 ways." But really, only Wonderful Bread builds a strong spirit through One Way, One Truth and One Life.