

My Conversion to the Word of Wisdom – James D. Simmons

Word of Wisdom Testimony, Stage 1: The Don'ts of the Word of Wisdom

My father was a family doctor and my mother has a degree in food science and nutrition. They taught me the importance of being prudent in my decisions regarding what I put into my body. They also taught me to abide by the counsels God gave in the *Word of Wisdom*. My testimony of the *Word of Wisdom* has grown in three stages. I first gained a testimony of the importance of abstaining from all things that cause harm to the body. My friends and I supported each other in living the *Word of Wisdom*, as it was then taught to us by our parents. We lived in a town that prided itself for drinking more beer per capita than any other city in the United States. During our senior year of high school one of my friends received the most outstanding athlete award in football, and I received the same award for track and field. We both believed that God blessed us for having strictly observed the Don'ts of the *Word of Wisdom*.

Word of Wisdom Testimony, Stage 2: A Plant-Based Diet

On our farm we grew a large garden, we had an orchard, and we ate food from every plant-based food group. We also milked cows, and since the USDA promoted milk as a perfect food, we drank it at every meal. We also raised beef cattle and chickens and hunted for wild game, including game birds, antelope, deer, and elk. My father, brother, and I brought home lots of wild game and fish. I loved to hunt and fish, but it led me to eat lots of meat, and I drank too much milk, setting the stage for chronic health problems that manifested themselves in me when I was just 32 years of age. My body became chronically fatigued and developed oozing rashes that covered me. Chronic pneumonia followed, and in order to recruit sufficient strength to fulfill my work responsibilities I slept 12+ hours daily. This condition lasted for eleven years.

Doctors did not have a solution for me then that would arrest, reverse, and cure my condition, so I fasted and prayed desiring to lay hold upon a needed solution. My fast began on a Monday, and it continued into the following Sabbath. During church service I found my heart crying out to God in prayer asking if there was anything that I could do to restore my former good health. I expressed a firm resolve to do whatever he might instruct me to do. God's form of instruction to me came by way of a voice from heaven that asked me very directly to prepare to take notes. I did so, and received the instruction I needed to best meet my condition and to overcome it. I followed the instructions with exactness, and within a few weeks my rashes dried up and went away, the deep discoloration of my skin caused by the prolonged rashes also went away, and my skin returned to a fleshy pink color that I had not enjoyed for eleven years.

During the weeks and months that followed, chronic bronchitis and pneumonia abated, my weight normalized to its former lean status, and my strength and good health returned in full, including an added measure of strength that I hadn't previously experience. My doctor ordered a series of blood tests, and the results represented the greatest turn-around in health that he had ever witnessed. The instructions I received from God were simple. I was given assurance that I would heal entirely by omitting animal-based foods from my diet until I completely overcame my diminished condition. I was instructed to include a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds in my daily meal planning.

I began that day and within six months I had entirely healed. After my return to health I was instructed to bear simple testimony of the *Word of Wisdom* to those who were interested in my change. When I asked why I was not to tell my story, I was instructed that I didn't know enough to talk about it properly. To those who asked, I bore testimony of the *Word of Wisdom*, as I then understood it. My testimony is that anyone who will fast and pray with real intent to obey God's health counsels will learn from God how to best apply his counsels to meet their needs. God does not impinge upon our agency, and if we want to do things our own way, as I did for many years, he will remain silent to us. Yet, if we sincerely desire to know his thoughts and his ways, and we ask with real intent to obey him, he will teach us freely and liberally.

During the five years that followed my recovery I read hundreds of books, studied hundreds of scientific reviews and began to increase in understanding. Through study and by faith I became entirely converted to a plant-based diet that limits animal-based foods to a sparing use. A desire grew within me to write a book. One day I took this desire with me to the temple. While there, God gave me further instructions as he had done before, and I left the temple with a knowledge that a measure of prosperity would be given to me, sufficient to work fulltime while researching and writing a book. My wife Colleen and I received this prosperity within a couple of months, and I then commenced working diligently to write the book.

To help me get started I was instructed to read daily from the *Book of Mormon*, and that if I did so I would be led by the *spirit of revelation* throughout my research, studies, and writing. As I followed these instructions I was led along as fast as I was willing and able to receive, process, and write further. This pattern continued unabated until the book was completed. The day the book was ready for press, I received further instruction. I learned by the same voice that the book was only a preface to my mission. I was surprised, because I had believed that the book was my life's work. I was left to wonder and ponder further about what my mission was.

It was joyous to me to see my first book in print. I named it *Original Fast Foods*. It shares the science, religion, and practical application of a predominantly plant-based diet. After receiving the book from off the press I was instructed to teach the message in the book freely to others (not monetize the message). My wife Colleen and I did so for four years and spoke to both large and small crowds in many venues. We were happy helping others, but I often wondered and prayed to know what my mission was, and why this book was only a preface to that mission.

Word of Wisdom Testimony, Stage 3: Keep All of God's Commandments

In the book, *Isaiah's Ascension*, Isaiah teaches that each creation period in our lives leads us to ascend further toward Godhood, and is preceded by a descent into chaos. In 2009, after having successfully taught thousands of people about the blessings of the plant-based counsels given to us in the *Word of Wisdom*, I fell ill. During a surgery that followed it was discovered that I was toxic inside. I struggled to return to former strength but could not, and I lost my confidence as a teacher of sound health practices. I ceased public speaking and sought to become well again. Weakness lingered in me, and I struggled to know how to go forward. During my descent into chaos my son asked me to write him a doctrinal letter each week. I did so and it initiated a new creation period in my life. I then wrote a new book from what I learned.

Back to Strong is my testimony of how we ascend to the state of righteousness we knew before this life when we had a perfect knowledge of God's infinite power to love, lift, and to do good in the universe. We saw that whatsoever good he put in his mind to do, he did and that all his words, works, designs, and purposes came to pass and never failed. Because of his characteristics, perfections, and attributes we desired to become like him. The book *Back to Strong* discusses how *keeping all God's commandments*, as counseled in the *Word of Wisdom*, enables us to be led by him to have our nature become like God's nature.



How does this happen? While creating champion pinewood derby cars with my sons, we learned that cars must have their axles and wheels polished and perfected until all needless friction has been overcome and the wheel can turn freely. By also balancing a car perfectly, it tracks straight and true down a track

without side-to-side movement. It thereby races to the finish line more swiftly. Finally, the wheels and axles are lubricated with graphite that quickens the car further.

Similarly, obeying every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God, or keeping all his commandments, enables our full potential to track straight, true, and swiftly within the *Strait and Narrow Path*, without wasted side to side movement, or ventures into forbidden paths. Obedience to God enables us to meet the conditions of the atonement and thereby qualify to receive spiritual graphite, or grace that quickens us in our ascension to become like God.

We are best enabled to do the work God sent us here to do as we strengthen our mortal tabernacle by nourishing it properly, as we abstain from all that diminishes us, and as we keep all God's commandments. As we do so we ascend to overcome every point of temporal and spiritual friction in our lives that slows down our journey in the redemptive pathway. For example, if we are easily angered, offended, or have other weaknesses that lead us to sin, these weaknesses prevent us from best using our strength to love, lift, and to do great good in the world. All character weaknesses prevent us from realizing our potential for doing good.

To better understand and make more fully alive in you the companion-doctrine to the temple endowment known as *The Word of Wisdom*, study *Original Fast Foods* and *Back to Strong*. Discover how to run and not be weary within the redemptive pathway, and how to walk and not faint as you do the work you were sent here to do. If you would meet the Bridegroom and feast with him as the Nephites feasted temporally and spiritually when he came to them, then keep God's counsels and receive his promises. His counsels are adapted to every person in Israel who will strictly keep their covenants. All such will have every weakness made strong unto them as the Lord dresses them in the robes of his righteousness, or in other words, in the robes of his light, knowledge, and omnipotent power over every form of evil.

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