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Interpretation and Adherence to the Prescriptive Elements of the Word of Wisdom among Latter-day Saints

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also called Mormon) has a health code generally referred to as the “Word of Wisdom.” Written in 1833, this code includes various dietary and other recommendations, including abstention from using tobacco and drinking alcohol, coffee, and tea. Although some of these dietary behaviors tend to be strictly followed by Church members, others are not. The purpose of this paper is to identify how a homogeneous group of young church members interpret and adhere to the prescriptive and prescriptive directives of the Word of Wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

Social learning theory holds that new behavior is learned through reinforcement or punishment, or through the observation of others in their environment. The theory assumes that as people observe positive, desirable outcomes, they are more likely to adopt the behavior themselves. Behaviors may be communicated through direct teachings and by associations (Bandura, 1977). For example, the direct teachings in the Latter-day Saints' health code referred to as the Word of Wisdom indicate that smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol, coffee, and tea are harmful to the body and should be avoided (D&C 89). Physical and spiritual benefits associated with living this doctrine are emphasized in talks and classes and are frequently reinforced by adult leaders who serve as role models for youth. Religious activity also reinforces other health-promoting behaviors such as education, family unity, and social support.

Among Latter-day Saints, abstention from tobacco, alcohol, coffee, and tea is strongly associated with Church activity (Merrill, Madanat, & Lyon, 2002). For example, a large statewide survey in Utah found that 93% of those who attended church weekly had never smoked cigarettes, compared with 55% of those who attended less than weekly (Merrill, Madanat, & Lyon, 2002). Corresponding percentages for alcohol drinking were 99% and 56%, respectively. The same study showed that Latter-day Saints who attended church weekly compared with...
those attending less than weekly had significantly lower levels of tobacco and alcohol use and experienced significantly lower levels of physical and psychological health problems.

The Word of Wisdom contains both proscriptive and prescriptive elements. To proscribe means to prohibit, denounce, forbid or disallow—it is sensitive to negative outcomes, is inhibition-based, and focuses on what we should not do (Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Hepp, 2009). The Word of Wisdom indicates that we should not consume “tobacco,” “strong drink,” and “hot drinks” (D&C 89). In contrast, to prescribe is to assert a rule or a guide, to recommend or direct—it is sensitive to positive outcomes, is activation-based, and focuses on what we should do (Merrill, Madanat, & Lyon, 2002). The Word of Wisdom tells us that we should consume wholesome herbs, fruits, and grains, and that meat should be eaten sparingly (D&C 89).

The Word of Wisdom was a revelation recorded by Joseph Smith in 1833 and first published in 1835 (Ludlow, 1992). Initially only a few church leaders working closely with the prophet Joseph Smith received the counsel to follow the Word of Wisdom (History, 1980). However, in 1834 a group of church leaders in Kirtland, Ohio, met and sustained a policy that the Word of Wisdom should be adopted by the whole church (As quoted by Harper, 2007, pp. 51-52). In various speeches, the importance of adhering to the Word of Wisdom was stressed by Church leaders (Alexander, 1981; Peterson, 1972; Minutes of the General Conference, 1851; Smith, 1842). Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Church, and his successors frequently advocated the doctrine (Peterson & Walker, 2003). Yet nineteenth century presidents of the Church were generally merciful to those who struggled with the use of proscribed substances (e.g., tobacco and alcohol), particularly those who had begun using these substances prior to the establishment of the Word of Wisdom (Harper, 2007). However, the doctrine gained prominence, and by the early part of the twentieth century adherence to the proscriptive elements of the doctrine became widely adopted (Alexander, 1986; Alexander, 1981; Peterson, 1972).

Despite efforts by early Church leaders to encourage Church members to live by the Word of Wisdom, it was not considered a commandment to be strictly observed by church members until the early 1900s (Alexander, 1981). During that time President Joseph F. Smith and his successor, Heber J. Grant, signified a notable transition in the emphasis given the Word of Wisdom, considering it as a commandment; adherence to the proscriptive elements of the doctrine became required for full priesthood participation and temple attendance among the general body of the Church (Alexander, 1986). From the 1890s into the 1920s, Church priesthood leaders reported that progress had been made in abstention from tobacco, alcohol, and coffee and tea (Peterson, 1972). The proscriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom have clearly undergone changes in emphasis during its 175-year history, and although it is acknowledged by Church leaders that it was not originally given as a commandment (Packer, 2007), it has been progressively treated as one since the early 1900s (Smith, 1908).1

The prescriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom have received much less attention and are not connected with full fellowship in the Church. This lack of emphasis on the prescriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom, all of which have been scientifically shown to contribute to better health and lower weight, is illustrated by the fact that Latter-day Saints in Utah tend to have significantly higher levels of obesity than their non-Latter-day Saint counterparts (Esselstyn, 2007; Merrill & Hillam, 2006; Nestle, 2006; Aldana, 2005; Campbell & Campbell, 2005; Katz & Gonzalez, 2002; Willet, 2001).

In light of epidemic trends in obesity worldwide and related increases in chronic disease, perhaps greater attention should be placed on the prescriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom.2 In order for Church leaders and counselors to place greater emphasis on the prescriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom, a better understanding of how Church members interpret and adhere to these elements is needed. The purpose of this study is to assess interpretation and adherence to the Word of Wisdom according to whether the directives are proscriptive or prescriptive. The study population consists of a homogenous group of religiously active young Latter-day Saints.

**METHODS**

**Population and Sample**

A cross-sectional survey was administered to Latter-day Saint students attending Brigham Young University and Utah Valley University. At Brigham Young University undergraduate classes were randomly selected, with
all students in those classes choosing to participate in the survey. Students at Utah Valley University were identified through a Latter-day Saint student stake consisting of ten wards, with students surveyed in their priesthood and relief society classes. All students completed the survey. Of 762 total questionnaires administered, 29 individuals had missing age or baptismal information, and 13 were older than 35 years. These surveys were excluded, leaving information from 720 students (355 from Brigham Young University classes and 365 from the Utah Valley University wards) for analysis. The only statistically significant difference in those removed from the analysis involved race, with 3% of Caucasian and 8% of non-Caucasian groups removed.

**Questionnaire**

Development of the questionnaire involved input from faculty in the College of Religious Education and the College of Health and Human Performance at Brigham Young University, student focus groups, and 250 students who pilot tested the instrument. This process allowed us to assess and improve the validity and reliability of the instrument. The final instrument consisted of questions on demographics, interpretation of the Word of Wisdom, and selected health behaviors. The demographic questions included gender, age, race, marital status, returned missionary status, location where the survey was taken, family income, location where the student was raised, mother’s education, and father’s education. Respondents were also asked whether they had adhered to the Word of Wisdom during their teenage years and whether it was adhered to in their home. Baptismal age was requested to determine time as Church members. (Individuals may be baptized as members of the Church at the age of eight years or older).

Participants were asked whether they thought certain substances were prohibited by the Word of Wisdom. They were also asked the meaning of “strong drink,” “hot drinks,” “wholesome herbs,” and eating meat “sparingly.” Health behavior questions focused primarily on the selected items specifically addressed in the Word of Wisdom. Students were asked how frequently they consumed vegetables, fruits, bran or whole grain cereal, brown rice or whole wheat breads, meat of any kind, coffee, tea, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and drugs. Although sleep and physical activity do not appear in the Word of Wisdom, questions were also asked about the average number of days per week participants were physically active (i.e., increased their heart rate for at least 20 minutes) and the average number of days per week they had sufficient sleep. These questions were developed using items from the Center for Disease Control’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey as a template. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Brigham Young University.

**Statistical Techniques**

Frequency distributions and measures of central tendency and dispersion were used to describe the study participants. The $t$ statistic was used for testing the null hypothesis of equality of means between independent groups. Logistic regression was used with the stepwise option to identify demographic variables associated with selected interpretation variables. Two-sided tests of significance were based on the 0.05 level against a null hypothesis of no association. Analyses were performed using SAS version 9.1 (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA, 2003).

**RESULTS**

**Demographics**

The average age of the study participants was 22 (SD = 2.7) years, with ages ranging from 18 to 35 years; 55% were male. Most participants had been baptized into the Church at the age of 8 ($M = 8.3$, $SD = 1.8$). Percentages relevant to the study are as follows: Caucasian (91%); single (90%); had served a Latter-day Saint mission (54%); felt they had adhered to the Word of Wisdom all of the time during their teenage years (75%); and felt that the Word of Wisdom had always been observed in their homes (83%). Approximately half (51%) of their mothers and slightly less than three-fourths (71%) of their fathers had a degree from a college, trade, or technical school.

**Proscriptions**

Participants were asked whether they thought selected tobacco items were prohibited by the Word of Wisdom. Although all recognized tobacco smoking as prohibited, above 96% also identified smoking nicotine-free tobacco, smoking substances other than tobacco, using fine ground tobacco or snuff, or using spitting or smokeless tobacco as prohibited.
The Word of Wisdom mentions “strong drinks” as being prohibited. The percentage of participants who associated strong drink with beer, liquor or spirits, or wine was 97%, 96%, and 96%, respectively. A clear majority also categorized coffee (84%) and selected teas (70%) as strong drinks. Only a slight majority considered energy drinks (52%) and nonalcoholic beer (52%) to be strong drinks, and 18% classified caffeinated soft drinks as strong drinks.

Participants were also asked whether they interpreted selected items as “hot drinks,” as described by the Word of Wisdom. Items most likely to be interpreted as “hot drinks” were coffee (98%) and black tea (96%). Many interpreted decaffeinated coffee (85%) and green tea (82%) as “hot drinks,” but not herbal tea (26%). A strong majority (78%) identified iced tea as a hot drink designated by the Word of Wisdom.

Consumption of those items largely perceived as being prohibited by the Word of Wisdom is presented in Table 1. The percentage of respondents who had ever used tobacco, alcohol, coffee, or tea was generally less than 10%. Only about 3% had used illicit drugs more than twice. Participants were asked whether illicit and non-prescribed recreational drugs are prohibited in the Word of Wisdom. About 87% said definitely yes, and 7% said probably yes. The percentage of participants with a history of illicit drug use was significantly related to whether they thought the Word of Wisdom specifically prohibits illicit drugs (Figure 1). Those who responded that illicit drugs are or are not prohibited by the Word of Wisdom were significantly less likely to have ever used illicit drugs than those who were unsure whether illicit drugs are prohibited by the Word of Wisdom.

### Table 1: Previous Use of Prohibited Items of the Word of Wisdom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Products of Any Kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>0.0724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice during your life</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic Beverages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>0.6066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice during your life</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>0.0069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice during your life</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>0.1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice during your life</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs (illegal/non-prescribed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>0.1219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice during your life</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prescriptions**

Participants were asked about the meaning of “wholesome herbs,” as referred to by the Word of Wisdom. Items most likely believed to be wholesome herbs were plants necessary for nutrition (97%), plants for human consumption (95%), grains (92%), vegetables (92%), fruits (89%), and plants for treating human illnesses (88%).

Despite the large percentage who considered fruits, vegetables, and grains to be wholesome herbs prescribed by the Word of Wisdom, fruit servings among participants only averaged 4–6 per week for males and one serving per day for females; vegetable servings averaged 4–6 per week for both males and females; bran/whole grain cereal averaged 2–3 servings per week for males and 4–6 servings per week for females; and brown rice/whole wheat bread averaged 2–3 servings per week for males and 4–6 servings per week for females (Table 2).
Participants were not unified in their interpretation of the Word of Wisdom with respect to meat (Table 3). Above 61% did not believe the Word of Wisdom limits meat consumption. However, 71% indicated that eating meat "sparingly" (D&C 89:12) refers to both how often (frequency) an individual should eat meat and the amount (quantity) of meat an individual should eat at one time. Considering an additional interpretation of eating meat "sparingly," the survey asked how often an individual should eat meat to comply with the directive in the Word of Wisdom. Only 11% believed that eating meat sparingly means once a month or less, but 60% believed the phrase means weekly, 19% thought daily, 8% said "as desired," and 3% did not believe that the direction to eat meat sparingly was relevant in the current era. Meat consumption of any kind averaged one serving per day for males and 4–6 servings per week for females (Table 4). The percentage of respondents eating meat once or more daily was significantly related to the respondents' interpretation of the Word of Wisdom directive to eat meat sparingly (Figure 2).

Table 3: Interpretation of meat consumption according to the Word of Wisdom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should the frequency of eating meat vary according to the time or season of year?</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrase "eat meat sparingly" (D&C 89:12), primarily refers to
 How often (frequency) an individual should eat meat
 The amount (quantity) of meat an individual should eat at one time
 Both of the above
 None of the above

To comply with the Word of Wisdom directive to "eat meat sparingly" (D&C 89:12), how often
 should an individual eat meat:
 Monthly
 Weekly
 Daily
 As desired
 The phrase is not relevant today

Note: Column percentages sum to 100. Numbers may not sum to 720 because of missing responses to the specific items.
Adequate sleep and physical activity, although not specifically prescribed in the Word of Wisdom, were included in the questionnaire. About 94% of participants believed that obtaining sufficient sleep is prescribed by the Word of Wisdom, and 94% believed that regular exercise is recommended by the Word of Wisdom. Males and females averaged only 4 days per week of physical activity with 20 minutes of increased heart rate (Table 5). Males and females also indicated that they received sufficient sleep four days per week on average. The mean number of days in a typical week of sufficient sleep was not significantly related to whether the respondent believed obtaining sufficient sleep is recommended by the Word of Wisdom (mean of 3.61 days per week for Yes and 3.56 for No; \( P = 0.8696 \)).

**DISCUSSION**

Almost all the participants identified tobacco, alcohol, coffee, tea, and illicit drugs as being prohibited by the Word of Wisdom. The proportion of respondents who reported ever having used these substances was low. The high level of recognition of these prohibited substances and the general tendency to abstain from using them is consistent with the Church’s emphasis on avoiding “tobacco,” “strong drink,” and “hot drinks.” Above 96% classified “strong drink” as beer, liquor or spirits, and wine. Slightly over half thought that energy drinks or nonalcoholic beer should be classified as strong drinks. This raises the question of whether alcoholic content is perceived as an essential ingredient of a strong drink.

Caffeinated soft drinks were considered strong drinks by 18% of the participants. Church leaders have not taken an official position on the caffeinated beverage issue since it was first raised in 1917 in the *Improvement Era*.
magazine (Harper, 2007). Both sides of the caffeinated beverage issue cite the lack of or the presence of some of these beverages at church-owned locations as justification for their position. In regards to issues like these, recent Church leaders have explained that the reason they do not take an official stance on all items available is that it is unfeasible and unnecessary and that common sense is required for these issues (Hinckley, 1989; Packer, 1996).

Almost all participants classified coffee (98%) and black tea (96%) as “hot drinks.” A smaller percentage identified green tea as a hot drink (i.e., 82%), and 26% identified herbal tea as a hot drink. Application seems basically consistent with belief: 88% had never drunk coffee, 95% had never drunk black tea, 84% had never drunk green tea, and 42% had never drunk herbal tea.

The Latter-day Saint Church Handbook of Instructions (2006) for local leaders contains two small paragraphs under the heading Word of Wisdom. The first paragraph reads, “The only official interpretation of ‘hot drinks’ (D&C 89:9) in the Word of Wisdom is the statement made by early Church leaders that the term ‘hot drinks’ means tea and coffee.” The second paragraph directs Latter-day Saints “that they should not use any substance that contains illegal drugs” and further excludes any harmful or habit-forming substances unless under the care of a competent physician. In addition, Gordon B. Hinckley, a former president of the Church, indicated that common sense is required to recognize those contemporary items that are not specifically prohibited by the historical Word of Wisdom (Hinckley, 1989). Hence the Church has clarified certain proscriptive aspects of the original revelation now found in D&C 89 and emphasized abstinence from harmful substances and common sense as the bases for applying the Word of Wisdom.

The specific passage in D&C 89 that transitions from prohibited items to those prescribed reads,

And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. (D&C 89:11)

The Word of Wisdom also encourages the consumption of all grain for man and beast, with an emphasis on wheat as the staff of life for man (D&C 89:14–17).

Scientific research supports that these prescriptions promote better health, and especially that grains and wholesome herbs should be the base of a healthy diet (Esselstyn, 2007; Merrill & Hillam, 2006; Nestle, 2006; Aldana, 2005; Campbell & Campbell, 2005; Katz & Gonzalez, 2002; Willet, 2001).

A high percentage of participants in the current study considered the use of fruits, vegetables, and other plants for human consumption, nutrition, and medication as among the prescriptions in the Word of Wisdom. Grains were also identified as being prescribed by the Word of Wisdom. However, adherence to the prescribed aspects of the Word of Wisdom was relatively low in these respondents, and their average consumption of these foods well below levels recommended by science and government (Gao, Wilde, Lichtenstein, & Tucker, 2006; MyPyramid.gov, 2005).

There was considerable variability in interpretation of the statement regarding meat and the frequency of actual meat consumption. The wording in the Word of Wisdom regarding meat may be interpreted as both proscriptive and prescriptive. To eat meat “sparingly” and “only in times of winter or of cold, or famine” are explicit phrases used in the Word of Wisdom. Verse 12 in Doctrine and Covenants section 89 reads: “Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly.” Today the word sparingly is open to broad interpretation since it is often used as a comparative adverb, as evidenced by this study.

There was a low correlation among participants between their interpretation of the statement about meat and their consumption of meat. In 1828, Noah Webster listed five definitions for the term sparingly:

1. Not abundantly
2. Frugally, parsimoniously, not lavishly
3. Abstinently, moderately
4. Seldom, not frequently
5. Cautiously, tenderly

Note that Webster’s definitions include the notions of amount (how much) and frequency (how often) and suggest disciplined caution. Under the third definition, the dictionary states, “Christians are obliged to taste even the innocent pleasures of life but sparingly” (Webster, 1828). Approximately 64% of males and 39% of females indicated that they ate at least one serving of meat per day. The modern tendency towards increased meat consumption has evolved through many factors, some of which include social philosophies concerning protein, ag-
gressive marketing, taste appeal, increased convenience, and modern refrigeration (Willet, 2001). Super-sizing our portions and increasing frequency of use appear to be the modern social trends of meat consumption in spite of sound scientific, physiological, and even theological reasoning to eat meat sparingly (Esselstyn, 2007; Merrill & Hillam, 2006; Nestle, 2006; Aldana, 2005; Campbell & Campbell, 2005; Katz & Gonzalez, 2002; Willet, 2001; Widstoe, 1943; Widstoe & Widstoe, 1937).

Doctrine and Covenants Section 89 verse 13 addresses the issue of meat consumption according to season of the year: “And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.” In this study, more than half of the respondents did not interpret the Word of Wisdom as limiting the consumption of meat according to the season, time of year, or famine conditions. The comma after the word “used” in verse 13 did not appear until the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (Peterson, 1972). The comma issue is just one reason meat consumption can be a sensitive or controversial part of the Word of Wisdom.

An explanation for these findings may be that since the Church does not require adherence to the prescriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom for full fellowship, they are not highly valued. Some may believe that the prescriptions are vague, leading to various interpretations and, consequently, differences in practice (Widstoe, 1943; Widstoe & Widstoe, 1937). However, at least in the case of consumption of fruit, vegetables, and grains, which were generally believed to be prescribed by the Word of Wisdom, adherence is low.

Physical activity and sleep behaviors were also considered in the study. Although physical activity and sleep are not mentioned as proscriptions or prescriptions in the Word of Wisdom, over 93% of the respondents believed they are contained in the doctrine. This may be because of the clear connection between physical activity, sleep, and personal health, or it may be due to the proximity of another scriptural passage which addresses sleep in Doctrine and Covenants 88:124. Nevertheless, believing these items are included in the Word of Wisdom was not well correlated with behavior in terms of sufficient levels of physical activity and sufficient sleep. This indicates that people consider getting sufficient physical activity and sleep as prescriptive, not proscriptive. Hence, the general disconnection between the prescribed items in the Word of Wisdom and actual behaviors is further illustrated.

A few limitations in this study should be mentioned. First, the study involved a convenience sample of religiously active college-aged Latter-day Saints from Brigham Young University and Utah Valley University. Although our aim was to identify a religiously active group of young Latter-day Saints who had been members for most of their lives, the sample may not be representative of all religiously active Latter-day Saints. Second, participants provided self-reported data on sensitive issues, which may have resulted in biased responses. However, the anonymous nature of the survey should have minimized such bias.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is high recognition of and compliance with the proscriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom. The lowest level of agreement and adherence to the proscriptive elements involved selected types of tea. The study also shows that consumption of fruits, vegetables, and grains is believed to be prescribed by the Word of Wisdom, yet many fail to consume adequate levels of these items. In addition, being physically active and getting sufficient sleep is believed by most participants to be a part of the Word of Wisdom, but many could not be considered physically active, nor are they getting sufficient sleep. Finally, there was little agreement on what it means to eat meat “sparingly,” and frequency of meat consumption varied considerably according to the individual’s interpretation.

Some of the physical and psychiatric health problems experienced among Latter-day Saints today could be reduced by greater adherence to the prescriptive elements of the Word of Wisdom. However, greater adherence may require making these elements more culturally or religiously prescriptive, or at least by placing a greater emphasis on the health and spiritual benefits of adhering to the prescriptive elements. This emphasis could be provided by Church leaders, by lay members in Church talks, by teachers in classes, and by counselors, as well as examples of adult role models in the Church. As for the consumption of meat and various types of tea, clarification may be needed from Church leaders to facilitate interpreting what it means to eat meat “sparingly” or how to identify prohibited beverages in our ever changing society.
REFERENCES


Minutes of the General Conference, Tuesday, Sep. 9, 1851, afternoon session; Millennial Star, 1852, vol. 13, p. 35.


The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (1889). Salt Lake City, UT: Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.


ENDNOTES

1. Smith, J.F. (1908). General Conference Report. President Joseph F. Smith read Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the Word of Wisdom. Then a vote to accept it as binding upon the members of the Church was unanimously passed.

2. These websites were again retrieved May 18, 2009 from: http://www.cdc.gov/NCIpubhealth/publications/AAG/obesity.htm and http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en/

3. Surveys were accessed through CDC’s home page (http://www.cdc.gov/brfss). Four different BRFSS years were analyzed, and the general format was emulated to the degree that the questions could be modified to fill the specific purpose in relationship to the Word of Wisdom.
