



LET'S VISIT A CHURCH IN ASIA IN THE first century A.D. The lay pastor, Gaius, has been personally trained by the apostle John, and is faithful to the teachings. More than that, I imagine that Gaius is completely devoted to building up the church and possibly leading its evangelistic outreach. It may be that he is so consumed with the work of the church that his own health is neglected. He is out of shape and on the verge of major lifestyle disease. Within that scenario, a letter arrives from his mentor:

"Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit" (3 John 2, NLT).*

Gaius is struck by the simple yet powerful expressions of love and concern. His friend's words haunt him. He turns them over in his mind daily. He feels a new, strong, overwhelming desire growing inside him. He comes to the realization that if he maintains his health, he would accomplish even more and for a longer time. He is now about 60 years old. His mentor, John, is a few years older, but healthy in body and soul.

Working the Plan

With these thoughts as part of his daily devotions, our lay pastor articulates the Gaius Principle:

"Since my soul is well, I will use the principles of a healthy soul as the empowering formula to supply motivation and inspiration to do what I know I need to do to change my health status."

Gaius decides to make transformation of his physical health a priority. He gets on the Internet and searches trustworthy information sites for the major medical and health research centers around the world. He gathers the background information to set up his action plan. He finds that research data from both the basic sciences and clinical studies support 10 basic laws of health. He takes these 10 laws and applies them as follows:

Water Intake

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I have been drinking each day of the water of life. Christ is this living water (John 4:10 and 7:37, 38).

Law of Physical Health: Sufficient water each day is necessary for a healthy body.¹

Action Plan: Each morning, the very first thing that should enter my body is a glass of pure water. I'll connect this habit with starting each day in a brief meditation on Christ, the Living Water. I'll see whether I become more conscious about my daily intake of approximately 64 ounces of water, as my mind dwells on spiritual water throughout the day. Could this be a way to empower health of my body inspired by health of my soul?



Nutrient Intake



Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I have been getting a daily supply of balanced spiritual nutrients. The most important nutrient for my soul's chemistry is belief in Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

Law of Physical Health: A balanced intake of essential nutrients keeps the body healthy.²

Action Plan: I will pay attention to the selection of food that supplies the appropriate amounts of complex carbohydrates, protein, and healthful fats, vitamins, minerals, and trace elements. I will connect my choices of physical food to my habit of selecting spiritual food daily. My most balanced meal of spiritual food is contemplation of the life of Christ.

Oxygen Supply From Fresh Air

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I breathe of the "air" of the Spirit. And through prayer, which the Spirit translates into the language of heaven, I am in constant contact with divine power (John 3:8; 14:17; Rom. 8:26). Prayer is constant fuel for the soul.

Law of Physical Health: Breathing deeply of fresh air as much as possible throughout the day is necessary to keep the body fully supplied with life-sustaining oxygen.³

Action Plan: I will endeavor each day to get out into the fresh air and practice deep breathing. My healthy soul habit of daily, earnest, sincere prayer will serve to remind me of my need for daily fresh air and the deep breathing habit. After all, "Prayer is the breath of the soul."⁴



Protection of DNA

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I get protection for my spiritual DNA. Just as physical DNA is a double helix with two strands of molecules twisted together, so too is spiritual DNA. The first strand is that God imprinted attributes of His nature on the human mind at Creation (Gen. 1:27). The second strand is that, under the new covenant, God writes His laws on the minds and hearts of believers (Heb. 8:10). Spiritual antioxidants are passages of Scripture hidden in the heart



(Ps. 119:11). This has afforded me protection from the roaming free radicals of unwise choices and rebellious attitudes.

Law of Physical Health: The genetic material, DNA, is susceptible to damage by free radicals produced in normal metabolism. DNA damage can result in cancer. Antioxidants in plant food help to protect DNA from damage.⁵

Action Plan: I will select a variety of plant foods every day to increase the antioxidant protection for physical DNA. Five to nine servings of vegetables and fruits with as many different colors as possible will help me to do this. As I plan my DNA protection to reduce my cancer risks, I will connect this process of conscious choice with my habit of selecting special protective passages from the Word.

Source of Energy

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy and energized because the energy of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), daily fills me with power to “fight the good fight.” I do not depend on secondhand sources and human wisdom to provide the energy for my soul. I go directly to the source.



Law of Physical Health: All energy used in metabolism (and almost all other uses of energy on earth) comes from the sun. Plants trap the energy and we eat plants firsthand or secondhand. The energy from food is transformed into cellular energy.⁶ The best source of energy is directly from plants.

Action Plan: I will endeavor to get frequent, safe exposure to direct sunlight as it has health-giving effects for my body. Eating a largely plant-based diet is best for the health of my body because the secondhand source of animal products comes with many risks. As I endeavor to maintain or switch to a plant-based diet, I will use the inspiration that health of the soul depends on direct contact with Christ, the source of all my spiritual energy.

Work for Fitness

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I do spiritual work. I fight, wrestle, and struggle with spiritual things and spiritual forces. Sometimes I lose a battle, sometimes I feel weak, but always I grow in spiritual strength and win the war through my Commander in Chief, Christ Jesus (Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Cor. 15:57).



Law of Physical Health: Physical exercise, at least 30 minutes per day, is needed to maintain the body’s organ systems in good working condition. Physical fitness has additional benefits on health of the mind and resistance to disease.⁷

Action Plan: I will set up and maintain a plan of physical exercise that works the body at a safe level for at least 30 minutes each day for cardiopulmonary fitness, or one hour per day for weight control and overall muscle and bone health. As I keep up this exercise and fitness plan, I will connect the work of my healthy soul in fighting the good fight to motivate and inspire my physical exercise plan.

Stress Control

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I have found a solution to any spiritual stress that may assault it. When the spiritual stress response is triggered, the fight-or-flight mechanisms give me armor for the fight (Eph. 6:10-17) and a place of refuge for the flight (Ps. 46:1-3; 57:1-3; Heb. 6:18-20).



Law of Physical Health: The effects on the body of excess mental and physical demands are called the stress response. Stressors trigger the fight-or-flight mechanism of the body. Hormonal changes that begin with the stress response can have long-term consequences on immune system function as well as health of the heart, gastrointestinal tract, joints—in fact, all systems of the body.⁸

Action Plan: As I seek to control the negative effects of the stress response, I will connect the spiritual fight-or-flight solution to the physical fight-or-flight mechanism. I will learn stress management, stress reduction, and stress resistance skills, knowing that I can always find a place of calm assurance in Christ where everything will be all right.

Rest and Sleep

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I find rest in Christ. The assurance of salvation, of sins forgiven, of strength for each day, and the blessed hope of eternal life is refreshing rest. That keeps my soul healthy. I have accepted the invitation to rest (Matt. 11:28, 29).



Law of Physical Health: The body must have time to rest and recover from the demands of all the input stimulation when awake. Six to nine hours of sleep at night serves most people best. Along with sleep, periods of rest and relaxation help the body systems to maintain proper function.⁹

Action Plan: I will pay attention to getting the required number of hours of sleep that allows me to wake up refreshed. As I plan or maintain my healthful sleep habit, I will connect that to the principles of spiritual rest that keep my soul healthy. Resting each day, resting on God's Sabbath, taking vacations that don't overtax my time and resources can be health-promoting for my body. The calm assurance that rest for the soul brings can help to reinforce healthful sleep habits.

The Growth Cycle of Life

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because my spiritual life has gone through several stages of growth from conception, birth, childhood, and adulthood. When I was a child, I spoke and acted as a child (1 Cor. 13:11). I had spiritual milk when that was appropriate food (1 Cor. 3:2; 1 Peter 2:2). Later, I required solid food for maturity in Christ (Heb. 5:12-14).

Law of Physical Health: The body matures through a series of growth stages from conception, fetal development, birth, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and aging. Each stage presents challenges and opportunities for health of the body.¹⁰



Action Plan: I will pay attention to the stage of life in which I find myself, and make the best of the opportunities and challenges. I'll formulate a lifestyle plan that would promote optimum growth and use of my abilities, while preparing for the next stage. I'll connect my progression through these life stages to the stages of my spiritual growth, with consciousness of the uncertainty of life and acceptance of the fact that each individual has a personal path to follow.

Reproductive Health

Gaius Principle: My soul is healthy because I am involved in gathering, harvesting, reproducing other believers for the kingdom of God. As I see new babes born into the kingdom, I feel like a spiritual parent and seek to fulfill the responsibilities to nurture new life not just for temporary continuation of the species, but for life everlasting (1 Cor. 4:14, 15; Gal. 4:19).



Law of Physical Health: The highest biological goal of all life forms is to reproduce to continue the species. Health of individuals and health of a species involve managing reproductive energy and behavior.¹¹

Action Plan: For my physical reproductive health, I will pay attention to my sexuality and its appropriate fulfillment. If I am single, I will remain chaste and sexually abstinent. If I am married, I will be temperate, kind, faithful, and thoughtful to my partner. Where it is present, I will work to overcome sexual addiction and the temptations of pornography. As

much as possible, and consistent with my belief system, having children by natural means or by adoption will be a matter of choice and preparedness. I will connect my reproductive health choices to my spiritual health by contemplating what it means to be a spiritual parent and a spiritual child at the same time.

The Fires of Health

Gaius met John face-to-face a short time later (3 John 14). Let's again give some freedom to our imagination and speculate about the outcome of this new insight between two wonderful friends:

The fires of creative planning burned brightly as the two friends talked about not just a plan for Gaius's health, but for the whole church—a Christ-centered wellness program with evangelistic fervor. John stayed on to help Gaius launch this new health and wellness ministry. The inspiration caught on with a few people, and then spread in ever-widening circles in the manner of an epidemic. The whole church got involved in testing what lifestyle changes were possible through the application of the Gaius Principle. Soon the community around the church wanted to learn about the program as they saw the transformation in the health of the church.



Gaius remained humble, obedient, and teachable as his life was transformed by the power of anchoring his wellness plan in Christ. He never lost sight of the fact that it was brotherly love expressed by his spiritual father that led him to devise an action plan for redeeming his physical health. That plan was grounded in Christ and framed by love.

Let's speculate further for an ending to the story: Gaius continued the evangelistic crusades based on the health ministry principles of Christ-centered wellness. The contagiousness of the message brought thousands of new converts to accept Christianity. John kept in touch with the growth of this church, which reminded him of the early post-Pentecostal days.

The church entered new territory as the combination of the gospel message and the health message empowered the lives of its members. Action plans for health were grounded in Christ, and executed in love. And when John was writing his inspired messages to the seven churches of Asia as recorded in Revelation 2 and 3, a church that exemplified love in action was one of them. It was called Philadelphia. The lay pastor's name was Gaius.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, . . . I know your works. See I have set before you an open door. . . . Because you have kept My command to persevere, I will also keep you. . . . Behold I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:7-13, NKJV).†

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¹“Report Sets Dietary Intake Levels for Water, Salt, and Potassium to Maintain Health and Reduce Chronic Disease Risk” (www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=10925, posted Feb. 11, 2004; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).

²“Dietary Reference Intakes,” Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Canada (www.._hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/diet_ref_e.html, last updated Oct. 1, 2004; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).

³“Exercise and the Lungs,” British Lung Foundation (www.britishlungfoundation.org/; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).[exercise-and-the-lungs.asp?lung=4](http://www.britishlungfoundation.org/exercise-and-the-lungs.asp?lung=4)

⁴White, Ellen G., *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1930), p. 249.

⁵“European Research on the Functional Effects of Dietary Antioxidants” (www.ifr.bbsrc.ac.uk/EUROFEDA/researchdoc.pdf, posted Jan. 2003; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).

⁶“Sunlight and the Earth” (www-spof.gsfc.nasa.gov/stargaze/Sun1lite.htm, updated Sept. 22, 2004; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).

⁷“Exercise and Physical Fitness—Latest News” (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exercise, regularly updated; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).[andphysicalfitness.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exercise.andphysicalfitness.html)

⁸“Canadian Database on Time Pressure, Stress, and Health” (www.lifestress.uwaterloo.ca/, last updated Apr. 30, 2003; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).[Introduction.htm](http://www.lifestress.uwaterloo.ca/Introduction.htm)

⁹“The Benefits of Sleep” (www.vhi.ie/hfiles/, posted May 14, 2004; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).[hf-236.jsp](http://www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-236.jsp)

¹⁰“Life Expectancy, Health Expectancy, and the Life Cycle” (policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v6n2_art_05, updated May 17, 2004; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).

¹¹“UN Report Highlights SA’s [South Africa’s] Health Challenges” (allafrica.com/stories/200409170446.html, posted Sept. 17, 2004; accessed Sept. 19, 2004).

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