

Removing Obstacles To A Renewed Mind In 2009

Introduction

The proverbial New Year approaching offers us another opportunity to make some changes to our lives. This article is about changes we can make to improve the ability of our limited mind to comprehend God's omniscient mind.

Today's church encounters many obstacles to biblical literacy, a renewed mind and growth in Christian character. Some commonly exposed obstacles are busyness, misplaced priorities, lack of discipline and un-confessed sin.

These obstacles exist, however, this article discusses the obstacles of illiteracy, mind control through TV programming, diet and bodily exercise.

Becoming more like the great God and Savior Jesus Christ is a by-product of a renovated intellect. (Romans 12:2) Some would like to spiritualize away the intellectual component of spiritual growth. Yes, a person with an IQ of 100 can please God as much, or even more, than someone with an IQ of 130. (1 Corinthians 1:26) Pleasing God isn't about how talented we are. It's about how faithful we've been to use the talents God has given to us for serving others. (Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:14-30)

Neither the genius nor your basic "Joe The Plumber" will please God, however, without reading scripture. This is especially true in this highly populated western world in which we're continually faced with antichristian input through employment, education, billboard and store advertising, and conversation with relatives, friends and neighbors. Not to minimize the tremendous demonic pressures third world converts face, however, a new believer in the eastern third world without a Bible of their own doesn't face the information war we rich westerners do. (1 Timothy 5:6-11)

The spiritual nourishment of babies and developed believers in Christ depends on the application of academic skills- the language arts of reading and listening to truth. (2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 119; Ephesians 4:11-24)

Pure religion is the result of an act of the will and intellect in obedience to God's Spirit; not mindless possession by a new spirit. (Mark 12:30; James 1:27)

If a person received God's Spirit and failed to read God's word, their character wouldn't change. Spiritual growth is a progressive process dependent upon appropriate spiritual nourishment. (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-13, 1 Corinthians 3:2)

Appropriate spiritual nourishment comes from carefully monitoring the mind's diet. Cars perform best when quality fuel is injected into a properly tuned and filtered system. Likewise, we're able to grow more Christ-like when moral impurities, lies and deception are filtered out of our lives and pure truth is poured in. (Matthew 9:14-17)

Christ-like character transformation requires that we choose to tune our brain to the frequency of God's wisdom. This choice requires tuning out the wisdom of the world system. (Romans 12:2)

Tuning out doesn't have to involve isolation from the news and philosophy of the world system. It means abandonment of trust in man's system and antichristian values. (Jeremiah 17:5-10; Isaiah 2:5-22)

There's a place for information "fasting" at times. The growing Christian, however, should seek to be truthfully informed and discerning without being conformed, deceived and deceiving. (Matthew 10:16; 2 Timothy 3:13)

Unholy conformity to the world system involves attempting to mix the world's wisdom with God's wisdom in order to dominate, "better one's self", or be secure. This conformance transforms one into an unstable, double minded devil; one more fit for hell than heaven. (James 1:8, 3:13-18; Matthew 6:19-24)

Seeking the free fruits of God's Spirit such as peace and joy in pharmaceutical meds brings a curse upon life, not a blessing. Seeking wealth and security through investing in the world system, rather than working hard and trusting God to provide as he chooses, brings a curse upon life, not a blessing. (Jeremiah 17:5-10)

God's holy word must be received in a "whatever it takes to become like God" kind of humility. This attitude is necessary for growth in Christ-likeness to occur. (James 1:21, James 4:6; Philippians 2:1-8; Matthew 23:12)

Becoming more like Jesus Christ through God's spirit means continual death to our sinful nature. This growth isn't self improvement or behavior management. The normal Christian is continually dying to self; not indulging self. (Matthew 16:24; Galatians 5:18-26)

In order to more like God, a Christian must have the physical and intellectual capability to receive truthful input. I can tune my shortwave receiver to the correct frequency in order to receive a scheduled broadcast. At times, however, I'm unable to understand the broadcast because of interference. Likewise, a Christian may intend to read the scripture and be unable to receive the nourishment God intended because of interfering obstacles.

This article examines this issue and how to overcome so that we “may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (Philippians 1:9-11)

Illiteracy

The first obstacle to be considered is illiteracy. Illiteracy is commonly thought of as being unable to read. In reality, however, illiteracy is the state of being untaught or unlearned due to the lack of reading and or a lack of reasoning skills.

Being unable to read at required levels for Christian growth has become a real issue in the United States. The estimated reading level required to comprehend the most popular bible translations ranges from 6th grade to 12th grade level. Many Americans, however, are unable to comprehend at these levels. This illiteracy affects church morality. An illiterate, immoral church leads to national immorality. (Matthew 5:13-16; Ephesians 4:10-16, 5:11)

Instead of going to the scripture for daily spiritual food, illiterates primarily tune their heart to televised messages throughout the week. At best, their daily bread comes through a lukewarm U.S. Christian radio teacher. At worst, it's received through a combination of mainstream U.S. TV programming and lukewarm, U.S. Christian radio and TV programming. In some unfortunate cases, however, the only input received is mainstream U.S. TV programming. On Sunday, many of the “faithful” receive recycled spiritual food—recycled from the prior year or recycled from other lukewarm pastor teachers. How badly we need repentance from biblically illiterate U.S. Christianity and its associated antichristian values in order that the church not suffer a famine of hearing the words of the Lord in these last days before his glorious return. (Amos 8: 1-14) Elders, humbly feed the flock of God, not as lords, but as living examples of the truth you teach. (1 Peter 5:1-5)

Illiterate Christians, read, however, they remain untaught in specific areas. These blind spots affect the ability to form godly values and make ethical choices pleasing to God.

Where have we gone wrong? In addition to U.S. Christianity, much of our fall comes from the impact of public school education upon the church in the last century or so.

American education began as a process resulting in a person's God-given talents being discovered through imparting knowledge of truth, language, literature, speech, writing, mathematical and scientific reasoning, history, and literature.

In 1828 Webster American Dictionary of the English Language defined education as follows:

“The bringing up, as of a child; instructions; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; ...”

The 1913 Webster’s Secondary School Dictionary defined education as;

“the impartation or acquisition of knowledge, skill, or development of character, as by study or discipline.”... “Discipline, severe and systematic training, esp. with a view to right conduct or prompt and effective action.”

The 1927 New Century Dictionary of the English Language defined education like this:

“The drawing out of a person’s innate talents and abilities by imparting the knowledge of languages, scientific reasoning, history, literature, rhetoric, etc. – the channels through which those abilities would flourish and serve.”

The 1991 New Webster’s Dictionary provides this definition:

“to cultivate and discipline the mind and other faculties by teaching; send to school.”

From this quick historical survey of the definition of education its obvious that the world has progressively redefined the term.

Education today, even in private schools, is much about feeling, peer interaction, socialization and objective test results. Benjamin Bloom, the father of modern Outcome Based Education, defined education as changing the thoughts, actions and feelings of students. Clearly, education has become much less about developing a truthful, highly literate, academically skilled and intellectually capable person. (Iserbyt, 1999)

Accredited private Christian schools in the Carolinas where I have worked are basically public schools minus racial diversity and children with diagnosed behavioral and learning problems. Unlike public schools, they teach the Bible, Creation, America as a “Christian Nation” and have “Christian Music”. In general, however, I’ve found minimal difference between moral values communicated at public and private schools.

The following article entitled "America the Illiterate" describes our current plight, some of the reasons for its existence, and implications upon our national future.

November 16, 2008 "Truthdig" -- - We live in two Americas. One America, now the minority, functions in a print-based, literate world. It can cope with complexity and has the intellectual tools to separate illusion from truth. The other America, which constitutes the majority, exists in a non-reality-based belief system. This America, dependent on skillfully manipulated images for information, has severed itself from the literate, print-based culture. It cannot differentiate between lies and truth. It is informed by simplistic, childish narratives and clichés. It is thrown into confusion by ambiguity, nuance and self-reflection. This divide, more than race, class or gender, more than rural or urban, believer or nonbeliever, red state or blue state, has split the country into radically distinct, unbridgeable and antagonistic entities.

There are over 42 million American adults, 20 percent of whom hold high school diplomas, who cannot read, as well as the 50 million who read at a fourth- or fifth-grade level. Nearly a third of the nation's population is illiterate or barely literate. And their numbers are growing by an estimated 2 million a year. But even those who are supposedly literate retreat in huge numbers into this image-based existence. A third of high school graduates, along with 42 percent of college graduates, never read a book after they finish school. Eighty percent of the families in the United States last year did not buy a book.

The illiterate rarely vote, and when they do vote they do so without the ability to make decisions based on textual information. American political campaigns, which have learned to speak in the comforting epistemology of images, eschew real ideas and policy for cheap slogans and reassuring personal narratives. Political propaganda now masquerades as ideology. Political campaigns have become an experience. They do not require cognitive or self-critical skills. They are designed to ignite pseudo-religious feelings of euphoria, empowerment and collective salvation. Campaigns that succeed are carefully constructed psychological instruments that manipulate fickle public moods, emotions and impulses, many of which are subliminal. They create a public ecstasy that annuls individuality and fosters a state of mindlessness. They thrust us into an eternal present. They cater to a nation that now lives in a state of permanent amnesia. It is style and story, not content or history or reality, which inform our politics and our lives. We prefer happy illusions. And it works because so much of the American electorate, including those who should know better, blindly cast ballots for slogans, smiles, the cheerful family tableaux, narratives and the perceived sincerity and the attractiveness of candidates. We confuse how we feel with knowledge.

The illiterate and semi-literate, once the campaigns are over, remain powerless. They still cannot protect their children from dysfunctional public schools. They

still cannot understand predatory loan deals, the intricacies of mortgage papers, credit card agreements and equity lines of credit that drive them into foreclosures and bankruptcies. They still struggle with the most basic chores of daily life from reading instructions on medicine bottles to filling out bank forms, car loan documents and unemployment benefit and insurance papers. They watch helplessly and without comprehension as hundreds of thousands of jobs are shed. They are hostages to brands. Brands come with images and slogans. Images and slogans are all they understand. Many eat at fast food restaurants not only because it is cheap but because they can order from pictures rather than menus. And those who serve them, also semi-literate or illiterate, punch in orders on cash registers whose keys are marked with symbols and pictures. This is our brave new world.

Political (corporate and church-my addition) leaders in our post-literate society no longer need to be competent, sincere or honest. They only need to appear to have these qualities. Most of all they need a story, a narrative. The reality of the narrative is irrelevant. It can be completely at odds with the facts. The consistency and emotional appeal of the story are paramount. The most essential skill in political theater and the consumer culture is artifice. Those who are best at artifice succeed. Those who have not mastered the art of artifice fail. In an age of images and entertainment, in an age of instant emotional gratification, we do not seek or want honesty. We ask to be indulged and entertained by clichés, stereotypes and mythic narratives that tell us we can be whomever we want to be, that we live in the greatest country on Earth, that we are endowed with superior moral and physical qualities and that our glorious future is preordained, either because of our attributes as Americans or because we are blessed by God or both.

The ability to magnify these simple and childish lies, to repeat them and have surrogates repeat them in endless loops of news cycles, gives these lies the aura of an uncontested truth. We are repeatedly fed words or phrases like yes we can, maverick, change, pro-life, hope or war on terror. It feels good not to think. All we have to do is visualize what we want, believe in ourselves and summon those hidden inner resources, whether divine or national, that make the world conform to our desires. Reality is never an impediment to our advancement.

The Princeton Review analyzed the transcripts of the Gore-Bush debates, the Clinton-Bush-Perot debates of 1992, the Kennedy-Nixon debates of 1960 and the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. It reviewed these transcripts using a standard vocabulary test that indicates the minimum educational standard needed for a reader to grasp the text. During the 2000 debates, George W. Bush spoke at a sixth-grade level (6.7) and Al Gore at a seventh-grade level (7.6). In the 1992 debates, Bill Clinton spoke at a seventh-grade level (7.6), while George H.W. Bush spoke at a sixth-grade level (6.8), as did H. Ross Perot (6.3). In the debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, the candidates spoke in language used by 10th-graders. In the debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A.

Douglas the scores were respectively 11.2 and 12.0. In short, today's political rhetoric is designed to be comprehensible to a 10-year-old child or an adult with a sixth-grade reading level. It is fitted to this level of comprehension because most Americans speak, think and are entertained at this level. This is why serious film and theater and other serious artistic expression, as well as newspapers and books, are being pushed to the margins of American society. Voltaire was the most famous man of the 18th century. Today the most famous "person" is Mickey Mouse.

In our post-literate world, because ideas are inaccessible, there is a need for constant stimulus. News, political debate, theater, art and books are judged not on the power of their ideas but on their ability to entertain. Cultural products that force us to examine ourselves and our society are condemned as elitist and impenetrable. Hannah Arendt warned that the marketization of culture leads to its degradation, that this marketization creates a new celebrity class of intellectuals who, although well read and informed themselves, see their role in society as persuading the masses that "Hamlet" can be as entertaining as "The Lion King" and perhaps as educational. "Culture," she wrote, "is being destroyed in order to yield entertainment."

"There are many great authors of the past who have survived centuries of oblivion and neglect," Arendt wrote, "but it is still an open question whether they will be able to survive an entertaining version of what they have to say."

The change from a print-based to an image-based society has transformed our nation. Huge segments of our population, especially those who live in the embrace of the Christian right and the consumer culture, are completely unmoored from reality. They lack the capacity to search for truth and cope rationally with our mounting social and economic ills. They seek clarity, entertainment and order. They are willing to use force to impose this clarity on others, especially those who do not speak as they speak and think as they think. All the traditional tools of democracies, including dispassionate scientific and historical truth, facts, news and rational debate, are useless instruments in a world that lacks the capacity to use them.

As we descend into a devastating economic crisis, one that Barack Obama cannot halt, there will be tens of millions of Americans who will be ruthlessly thrust aside. As their houses are foreclosed, as their jobs are lost, as they are forced to declare bankruptcy and watch their communities collapse, they will retreat even further into irrational fantasy. They will be led toward glittering and self-destructive illusions by our modern Pied Pipers—our corporate advertisers, our charlatan preachers, our television news celebrities, our self-help gurus, our entertainment industry and our political demagogues—who will offer increasingly absurd forms of escapism.

The core values of our open society, the ability to think for oneself, to draw

independent conclusions, to express dissent when judgment and common sense indicate something is wrong, to be self-critical, to challenge authority, to understand historical facts, to separate truth from lies, to advocate for change and to acknowledge that there are other views, different ways of being, that are morally and socially acceptable, are dying. Obama used hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign funds to appeal to and manipulate this illiteracy and irrationalism to his advantage, but these forces will prove to be his most deadly nemesis once they collide with the awful reality that awaits us.

When you couple a nation where over 3 out of 10 people are functionally illiterate, with an unfaithful church that, for the purpose of tax benefits, has treacherously exchanged her responsibility to shine God's moral light of truth on public policy; you have a nation ready to be devoured by wolves posing as saviors.

The first step to overcoming the growing illiteracy of the church is to admit that we have a problem. The next step could be to take our TV set(s) to the local dump.

Television

Even among those able to read at required levels, nearly all of these believers have chosen to position a potentially powerful satanic tool and enemy of their mind within their homes in the form of the television. I know that to suggest that we get rid of the TV is considered extremist and imbalanced. Balance, however, is devil speak for lukewarm and double minded. Lukewarm is that awful balanced spiritual temperature God hates found midway between hot and cold. (Revelation 3:14-22) Double minded is an unstable spiritual state God hates in which a person seeks to balance worldly and godly values. (James 1:8, 4:8)

Isn't it hypocritical to get rid of the TV and not all electronic media communication devices? In my opinion, absolutely not. Radio and computer don't have the ability to immediately grab and hold the attention of the human mind like the mind numbing flicker rate of TV. Manipulative control of our socio-political opinions, moral values and monetary spending occur primarily through corporately sponsored TV images. These images are controlled by the sender, not the viewer. The best way for people to stop tyranny in its tracks is to destroy the means of communication the tyrants have with us by getting rid of our TV's. The 2009 government mandated conversion to digital television (DTV) can only enhance its potential to manage public thought and thereby control public action.

(<http://news.zdnet.co.uk/itmanagement/0,1000000308,2085326,00.htm>)

In 2004, we decided to eliminate television from our home. We're thankful that we did and have never missed watching it. The only TV I've seen in the past 4-5

years has been news excerpts- in restaurants while eating, while working outside class at school, or when visiting relatives.

Television's harmful influence is both overt and covert. Anton LaVey, the founder of America's Church of Satan in 1966, had this to say about television and its satanically magical origin and purposes.

The birth of TV was a magical event foreshadowing its satanic significance. The first commercial broadcast was aired on Walpurgisnacht, April 30th, 1939, at the New York World's Fair. Since then, TV's infiltration has been so gradual, so complete that no one even noticed. People don't need to go to church anymore; they get their morality plays on television. (LaVey, 1992)

"We can use TV as a potent propaganda machine. The stage is set for the infusion of true satanic philosophy and potent (emotionally inspiring) music to accompany the inverted crosses and pentagrams." (LaVey, 1992)

Television is deceitful mind programming; a mind control tool strongly contributing to American illiteracy. Programmers employ cinematic tricks to captivate the mind and transform them into a passive, hypnotic, alpha brainwave state. This relaxed state is addictive. The mind numbing effect of TV appears to be inherent in the technology as proven by the Mulholland experiment of the early 1970's.

In this experiment, 10 children were connected to electroencephalograph (EEG) machines to measure their brain wave activity. They were placed in front of their chosen favorite programs. Slow alpha brainwaves, not faster beta brainwaves, were observed. This change in brainwave speed indicates passive, not active, viewer response. Alpha brainwaves are typical of a coma or trance state present when a person isn't interacting with the outside world.

The following are brief excerpts from the book entitled, **TV-FREE- The Awful Truth about Television** which can be downloaded for free at <http://www.trashyourtv.com/>.

"Virtually all TV programs use cinematic tricks to "grab" and "hold" the viewer's attention. Human brains are hard-wired to turn their attention towards things that suddenly change in the environment. This is an evolutionary benefit, because it helps humans evaluate potential threats. The body relaxes while the brain gathers information. The scientific term is the "orienting response"."

"Television programs exploit the orienting response. Sudden changes in volume, cuts, zooms, scene changes, or sudden movements on the TV cause you to look at the TV. Repeated changes have the effect of "holding" your attention.

Commercials, action movies, and music videos are notorious for containing large numbers of these sudden changes that "grab" and "hold" your attention."

"Once the orientation response glues your attention to the screen, some very strange, but subtle, things start to happen to your brain. The effects are somewhat pleasant and relaxing, at least while the TV is on."

"In fact, your brain goes into an alpha brainwave state. This state feels relaxing. You become less alert and more passive. The state is comparable to hypnosis. Worse, your lowered alertness and feelings of passivity do not end after you turn the TV off. The culprit for this effect is most likely the cathode ray tubes in your TV monitors, which can produce a flicker that your conscious mind does not detect.

According to a Scientific American study, "survey participants commonly reflect that television has somehow absorbed or sucked out their energy, leaving them depleted. They report that they have more difficulty concentrating after viewing than before."⁴⁵

Other studies have linked the passivity to the left side of the brain shutting down. The left-brain is primarily responsible for logical analysis and thought. In the Mulholland experiment, 10 children watched their favorite television program, while the researchers monitored their brainwave patterns. The researchers expected that the children would show a preponderance of beta waves. This would indicate that they were involved and responding to their favorite programs. Instead, they stayed in alpha. "They just sat back. They stayed almost the whole time in alpha. That meant that while they were watching they were not reacting, not orienting, not focusing, just spaced out," said Dr. Eric Peper.⁴⁶

"What these studies show is that the right side of the brain may be dutifully absorbing all the images from your television screen, but the left side is lulled into a stupor by the television's flicker. This makes analysis of the images difficult. It also makes it difficult to remember exactly what you have been watching. Furthermore, the research suggests that the left side of the brain may remain in a stupor even after you turn the TV off.

This has profound implications for watching news and other forms of educational TV. At best, TV learning is comparable to sleep teaching. That may be useful for commercials, at least for the companies that produce them. However, for subjects that require analysis and careful thought, the TV is virtually useless. It is more effective to read books and newspapers to learn about world events, than to watch it on a screen."

“Television can be especially damaging to developing minds. An alarming study from 2004 found that watching TV at ages one and three caused attention-related problems at age 7. The attention problems included whether the child had difficulty concentrating, was easily confused, was impulsive, had trouble with obsessions, or was restless.⁵¹ These are symptoms of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

*The researchers speculate that the developing brain may be more vulnerable to the over-stimulation of TV. Both the researchers and the sponsors of the study, The American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend that parents exercise caution in letting their children under the age of 2 years watch **any** television.⁵²*

This particular study only looked at very young children. However, given the other effects on the brain discussed earlier, especially the effects on concentration, it is likely that the television set is causing attention-related problems in older children and adults.” (Westphal)

⁴⁵ <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?articleID=0005339B-A694-1CC5-B4A8809EC588EEDF>

⁴⁶ Mander, Jerry. *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. Morrow Quill Paperbacks: New York. p. 210

⁵¹ <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/tvapril.pdf>

⁵² <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/tvapril.pdf>

⁵³ <http://tvfree.trashyourtv.com>

Why get rid of your TV?

- TV isn't brain friendly. It has a harmful effect upon the brain; especially young brains. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which we aren't to knowingly harm. (1 Corinthians 3:17, 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- TV is addictive. To varying degrees we become its slave. (Titus 1:8; Galatians 4:8-9; 5:1; 2 Peter 2:19)
- TV leads us into temptation in the areas of covetousness, which is idolatry, through seductive programming. (Matthew 6:13, 26:41; Mark 14:38; 1 Timothy 6:9; 1 Corinthians 10:14)
- TV leads us into sexual temptation. (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Proverbs 5:1-8)
- TV is a polluted well from which we can drink antichristian behavior, values and philosophies. (2 Corinthians 6:16; Jeremiah 2:13;
- TV isn't the most excellent way to spend time. It isn't a wise use of time or money. (Luke 22:46; 1 Timothy 6:3-14; Philippians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 12:31; Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; Proverbs 6:6-11, 12:11)

- TV distracts the mind and tempts us away from our calling to fight the good fight of faith through prayer. (1 Timothy 6:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- TV distracts the mind and tempts us away from reading and studying scripture. (2 Timothy 2:15)
- TV has been declared by satanic leaders as one of their most potent magical communication devices. (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)
- TV communicates fake pre-packaged news regularly. TV newscast regularly broadcast Video News Releases (VNRs). This news is undisclosed to viewers. Stations play it without conducting their own reporting. Its claims are unverified. VNRs are overwhelmingly produced for corporations as public relations tools used to sell products, polish corporate images and or promote policies and or actions beneficial to the corporation. (Proverbs 2:1-15; Proverbs 4:13-27, 8:13) (Price, 2006)
- TV provides corporately funded/controlled government(s) a universal means to control our perception of people, places and things. This perception can be manipulated to achieve the reality they desire for us to see, hear and feel. The reality is often at odds with the truth. (John 15:18, 17:13-17; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Matthew 4:8-10; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

When you consider all of the existing taboos in the church; how is it that pastors never teach that the church needs to get rid of the TV? When you look at its harmful effects, granted some of which are only potential effects, how can we justify our tolerance of TV? Regarding TV, I see the cup half full. It's an abominable cup of political and corporate propaganda, immorality, mindless entertainment, temptation, antichristian philosophies, false teachers, false history, demonic music and other atrocities that God hates. If God hates it, we should too! You will never regret getting rid of your TV and reinvesting the time you now spend watching TV in prayer, reading and studying scripture, and serving others in love with your spiritual gifts.

Having done away with the TV, we may also need to make some changes to our diet and level of physical activity in order to be able to spend additional time reading and studying scripture.

Diet and Physical Activity

The scriptures are clear that physical exercise is of some benefit. (1 Timothy 4:8) Its benefits impact the brain in ways helpful to reading, studying scripture and meditative analysis.

The following is an excerpt from Successful Aging of the Healthy Brain. This article was originally presented at the Conference of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on the Aging March 10, 2001, New Orleans, LA

First Joint Conference by Marian C. Diamond. Its entirety is found at http://www.newhorizons.org/neuro/diamond_aging.htm

“Let us now return to the five factors that I regard as essential for keeping our brains healthy and active throughout our life span. The first is DIET. Yes, diet is vital to the brain just as it is to our body as a whole. For the brain to grow healthily from infancy, it certainly needs protein to maintain and develop its nerve cells and their branches throughout life. In the outer layers of your brain you have millions of nerve cells and, stemming from them, as you can see, are what we refer to as branches or "processes," specifically they are called "dendrites."...

Returning to dietary components that are key to developing and maintaining a healthy brain, it has been well validated that choline is extremely important in the diet. Choline is necessary to form an important neurotransmitter, acetylcholine. Choline also forms enzymes that are associated with acetylcholine, ensuring that it functions appropriately. So important is acetylcholine that, according to Richard Wurtman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), nerve cells that do not get sufficient choline will cannibalize their own membrane to make acetylcholine.

By now, surely you want to know some of the dietary sources of choline! (1) Soybeans and their soy products. These days you will find an increasing number of soy-based products on the shelves. We tofu advocates have it with marmalade for breakfast. (2) Egg yolks. Yes, the cholesterol content is high, but those who do not have elevated cholesterol levels can have egg yolks and be assured of getting choline. (3) Peanuts. They are somewhat high in fat and sodium, but use them moderately along with other source foods. (My father always had a big bowl of peanuts for us when we came home from school.) (4) Liver. There are those who enjoy liver! I am one.

I mentioned only one neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, but, remember, you have about one hundred different neurotransmitters serving your body's chemical needs. Other important ones are dopamine, serotonin, and glutamate which, for sources, you can look up in your spare time.

We have known for years that B vitamins are essential for the well-being of the nervous system. Let us just take one B vitamin, vitamin B6. B6 is important in the metabolism of amino acids, which are the building blocks of proteins. And B6 is vital for the creation of neurotransmitters. Like nearly everything in life, however, this vitamin needs something else to help it function efficiently. In the case of B6, it is zinc.

Practically speaking, a vitamin B6 deficiency can have multiple effects, none of them pleasant. It can cause memory impairment which diminishes the ability to register, retain and retrieve things from the memory bank (actually, memory is

laced in and out of the brain, so I should say memory banks) A shortage of B6 also can lead to nerve damage in the hands and feet.

In what foods do we find B6? A few vitamin B6 sources are: potatoes, bananas, chicken breast, beef top round steak, turkey white meat, rice bran, carrot juice, rainbow trout. That represents a quick selection from the literature; one need not struggle too much to find dietary sources of vitamin B6.

Antioxidants are other important substances in the care and feeding of the brains. Most are well aware of the major antioxidants, vitamin C and vitamin E and their food sources. Recently, however, there has been much publicity given to blueberries and strawberries, touted by the venerable American Chemical Society as rich sources of antioxidants.

Next, it is important to discuss calcium and, in particular, the interaction of calcium and the parathyroid gland. Many are familiar with their thyroid gland in the neck, but did you know that the parathyroids are right there too? Usually four of them. They regulate the amount of calcium in your blood. If you have low blood calcium, hormones from the parathyroid glands have no trepidation about going to your bones to extract the calcium needed to raise its levels in the blood. Furthermore, everybody knows that calcium is important for bone structure and muscle contraction, among other roles, but did you know that calcium is also important for nerve impulse conduction?

Exercise

Now let us turn to our second key factor in maintaining a healthy brain: EXERCISE. We know that exercise improves skeletal muscle tone and function and that it helps the venous return in our legs, a good reason to keep our legs active. In fact, the value of regular exercise cannot be overrated. Among the long list of routine health conditions ameliorated by exercise, we hear today from many corners that lack of exercise is responsible for or contributes to the increased incidence of sugar diabetes, cardiovascular problems, obesity, and depression. Very important about exercise is that it is essential for bringing oxygen to all parts of the body, and, as I will explore now, especially to the brain. One particular brain structure is most vulnerable to a lack of oxygen, and that is the hippocampus. Early anatomists thought that the hippocampus resembled a seahorse.

The hippocampus deals with the processing of recent memory and visual spatial processing. As we age and our blood vessels become less efficient, it is very important to get the oxygen through the vascular system up to the hippocampus, as well as to the rest of the brain and body.

As a good exercise, I agree with those who emphasize swimming. Yes, walking is a wonderful form of exercise that uses our lower extremities, but total body

swimming exercises both upper and lower extremities. Many are well aware of feeling depressed after having been indoors for several hours. I certainly do. Exercise is a trustworthy antidote to depression. I am focusing on older adults now, but there is increasing concern that children are spending too much time sitting in front of their computers and video games, and not getting the exercise they need. (Interestingly, exercise has also been shown to benefit children with hyperactivity problems.)

Suffice it to say that everyone, from the toddler to the frail elderly should have some appropriate daily exercise routine that is as implanted in your day as brushing your teeth, getting dressed, and eating your breakfast. I advise a minimum of an hour a day, but you can work up to it. Five minutes is better than no minutes, and, for those who have never been exercise enthusiasts. Don't be surprised to find that it will cease being a "have-to" and become something you look forward to.

The following pointers to a healthy brain are taken from the following websites:

[http://www.brainaustralia.org.au/healthy_brain#relax;](http://www.brainaustralia.org.au/healthy_brain#relax)
http://www.ultraprevention.com/tools/top_ten_for_a_healthy_brain.htm
<http://www.trivita.com/US-EN/health/essentials.aspx>
<http://www.naturalnews.com/016353.html>

Nourish your brain with a healthy diet. Like any high-performance machine, the brain needs top quality fuel.

- Your brain needs well-balanced, low cholesterol, low saturated (animal-fat) diet. Timing is significant in nutrition. Studies have demonstrated the importance of a good breakfast.
- Eat plenty of cold-water fish such as tuna, trout, mackerel, and salmon. They're rich in omega-3 fatty acids; nutrients that help protect brain cells.
- For people who don't like fish, omega-3 fatty acids are also available in some plant foods, like flaxseed and walnuts, but they are not as potent in these forms. Fish remains the best source of omega-3s, and diets lacking in the essential fatty acids may need supplements.
- For optimal brain function, it's recommended that you consume fish at least two or three times a week. If your diet does not include enough of the omega-3 fatty acids or enough fish, you could consider taking supplements of fish oils or flaxseed oil.
- Your body converts long strings of amino acids in the protein you eat to individual amino acids that your brain converts to the specific proteins it needs.
- Your brain needs vitamins and minerals; they come from your diet. Research suggests anti-oxidant vitamins E and C protect the brain.

- Avoid excess food. Reducing calories can help slow age-related brain changes. Choose organic plant and animal products. Grab a dinner plate and follow these steps to a balanced meal: Look at your plate – you will only fill the center, undecorated portion. Divide the plate in half – fill one half with fresh fruits and vegetables. Divide the remaining half into two equal sections. Place lean meat or fish in one section. Place a high-fiber carbohydrate in the other – now you have a balanced meal!
- Drink lots of clean, filtered, fluoride free water
- Eat detoxifying foods including collards, kale, broccoli, watercress, pomegranate, rosemary, garlic and onions.
- Sweating helps to eliminate toxins through the skin.
- Increase your fiber intake to promote healthy elimination. One study found that people who were constipated had a fourfold increased risk of Parkinson's. So load up on those organic ground flax seeds (1 to 2 tablespoons a day)

In agrarian societies, people are naturally active. Natural air, sunlight and physical exertion encourage sleep. In industrial societies, most of us must plan our activity if we are to sleep well. Enjoy physical activity and sleep peacefully.

- Exercise daily if possible. Set exercise priorities and stick to them.
- Regular exercise reduces depression and reduces cardiovascular risk factors, even a simple walk lets you think freely
- Some exercise states may produce euphoria, but even 12 minute bouts of exercise (to 85% maximum heart rate) release serotonin, dopamine, and noradrenaline (like taking Prozac)
- Exercise in the evening after a stressful day, rather than early in the day
- Take exercise opportunities- climb stairs (up to three floors) instead of taking the lift, schedule in regular five-minute walking breaks, park your car away from lifts, escalators so you have to walk further.
- Having exercised, sleep peacefully. Sleep is the only time your body has to repair and rejuvenate every organ and system in your body. Sleep deprivation causes cellular damage, and limits the production of enzymes and hormones your body needs to keep your cells healthy, and prevent premature aging. Sleep also has a powerful impact on your emotional health – it eases stress and helps you cope with the ups and downs of your day. Strive to get eight hours of sleep every night. Get your exercise and avoid caffeine for at least 6 hours before bedtime. Perform this simple bedroom survey to see if your room is helping or hindering your quest for a peaceful night's sleep. Do you need room darkening window coverings to avoid the glare of early morning light? Does noise from other rooms or outdoors need to be minimized with better insulation or reorganization of your room? Does your mattress and pillow promote a good night's sleep or should they be replaced? Do you feel calm and restful in your room, or do you need to make changes that will make it more soothing? Do you use your room for

more than rest and relaxation – do you need to relocate your computer, television, or other distractions?

Conclusion

I hope and pray that this study has been informative, challenging and that our faith will be encouraged to serve the Lord wholeheartedly in 2009.

¹⁷*Pray without ceasing.*

¹⁸*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

¹⁹*Quench not the Spirit.*

²⁰*Despise not prophesyings.*

²¹*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

²²*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

²³*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

²⁴*Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:17-24)*

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