

Greatest Gift

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Study Given by W.D. Frazee—December 24,

It was on June 18, 1863, that the great vision on health reform was given to Ellen White in the farmhouse of Aaron Hilliard near Oswego, Michigan. Here is where heaven touched earth. Here is where the angel came with light on healthful living, which has spread around the world and blessed millions of people.

This place was a humble farmhouse, but that manger was in a humble stable in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. God's beginnings don't always make the headlines in the newspapers. But eventually the influence of anything God does reaches far beyond anything human beings could plan or execute. So it was with the visions on health reform.

Human beings usually pray about things that are hurting them. If your heart is burdened over sin you pray about that. If your heart is burdened over sickness you pray about that. If it is financial problems you pray about them. That's what God wants us to do. He invites us to come to Him with all our needs and problems and sorrows. And He says, Come unto Me and I will give you rest.

In 1863, James White, along with others of the pioneers, was already suffering from overwork and poor hygienic practices due to ignorance. He had a lack of a proper diet. He did not understand what a proper diet was. So, on a Friday evening in this farmhouse, they were praying for James White's health and healing. As she was praying, Sister White moved over and laid her hands on her husband's shoulders and prayed for him. In answer to that prayer God did not give a sudden healing for James White as they had previously experience. Instead God opened up the great subject of health and healing that has blessed millions of people, James White included.

If you want to read that vision you will find it in the little book, *Spiritual Gifts* in the chapter on health. You will also find it in the book, *How to Live* the sections of which are now in *Selected Messages*, Book 2, the final section on *Disease and its Causes*. It is interesting to read those writing written nearly 120 years ago and see how marvelously God opened up the great subject of health in a time when much of this was contrary to health understanding.

But although James and Ellen White took hold of health reform, they could not undo in a few months the harm that had come through years of transgression of nature's laws. In 1865, James White suffered a stroke. In answer to prayer he was partially restored, but still many of his weaknesses lingered. So they decided to take him to Danville, New York to a health institution called Our Home on the Hillside.

This institution was headed by Doctor Jackson. He had a team of physicians, both men and women working with him. It was at that time the outstanding healing place in this country. And while they received great blessings in some lines, yet their minds were disturbed by a lack of emphasis on religion. In fact there was a rather antagonistic attitude toward religion. In the case of James White, Doctor Jackson actually thought that James White had worked so hard in religion that it was bad for him, and he needed to forget it for a while.

There are people today who have those ideas. But thank the Lord, James and Ellen White had light from heaven in the 1863 vision.

There were extremes in diet at Our Home on the Hillside.. There was a lot dancing and card playing and other amusements going on to divert the attention of the patients. So for these and other reason James and Ellen White couldn't get the help that they needed and God wanted them to have. So, in December of 1865, they journeyed to Rochester, not far from Danville. They called together brethren and sisters to pray for James White. They kept that up for ten days. Three times a day they petitioned the Lord to heal James White. That is the setting of what I will now read:

“Christmas evening, as we were humbling ourselves before God, and earnestly pleading for deliverance, the light of heaven seemed to shine upon us, and I was wrapped in a vision of God's glory. It seemed that I was born quickly from earth to heaven where all was health, beauty, and glory. Strains of music fell upon my ear, melodious, perfect, and entrancing. I was permitted to enjoy this scene awhile before my attention was called to this dark world. Then my attention was called to things taking place upon this earth. I had an encouraging view of the case of my husband” *Life's Sketches*.

“In the vision given me December 25, 1865, I saw that the health reform was a great enterprise, closely connected with the present truth, and that Seventh-day Adventist should have a home for the sick where they could be treated for their diseases and also learn how to take care of themselves so as to prevent sickness” *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, page 553.

A few years after this Doctor Kellogg began to lead out in the work of the health institution. He called it the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Someone told him the word sanitarium was not in the dictionary. He said, It will be. Thank God, it is.

There are three features of a blueprint sanitarium. It is a home-like place. It is a place where people come to get well and also learn how to keep well. It is a place of treatment, and also health education. That is a Seventh-day Adventist sanitarium. I am so glad that God put one of those sanitariums in a little place called Wildwood, aren't you?

Incidentally, that was Christmas day too. 41 years ago tomorrow, December 25, four of us met in a little room in a little building, which has since burned, and put our hearts and our hands together to establish the Wildwood sanitarium.

Why do Seventh-day Adventists have sanitariums? They have them because God sent His angel to Oswego, Michigan, June 16, 1863, and gave us a program of healing. He sent that same angel to Rochester, New York in 1865, and told us to establish a home-like institution where those principles could be carried out both in treatment and health education. Isn't it wonderful to be working from marching orders from the command center of the universe? I thank God for it.

Through the years that followed those visions God continued to give through His chosen messenger thousands of details of how to do this work. They are in the books, *Medical Ministry*, *Counsels on Health*, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, as well as the nine volumes of the *Testimonies*. They are also in that priceless volume, *Ministry of Healing*. And I thank God for every page of these inspired counsels. What a blessing they have been, and are being to many.

Some of you will be interested in some statements written by the editor of a great religious periodical published by another denomination. He fell sick, and his physician, who was not a Seventh-day Adventist, referred him to one of our sanitariums. This is what his doctor said:

“Yes, it is an Adventist sanitarium, but believe me, some of the most accurate reports of diagnosis and treatment that I have ever received from any source came from that hospital. They are largely vegetarian in habit and diet, and take no chances with meats of any kind. And the longer I live the more I am convinced that they are not far wrong in that particular.”

So this non-Adventist, on the recommendation of his doctor, came to this sanitarium, and spent a period of time receiving treatment. He wrote an editorial as a tribute to the sanitarium, telling about how much he appreciated the music, the singing of the nurses of Gospel hymns. He told how he appreciated the care of the physicians and the whole program. Later on he wrote another editorial and this is what he said:

“A friend back home who has honored me by reading these observations writes to know if I am about to turn Seventh-day Adventist. My reply was, ‘Not yet. I am not good enough.’”

God gave us this medical missionary work not only to reach the physical needs of thousands of people, but to present the saving truths of the great message which is to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

I want to tell a providence that happened some months back. The Columbia Broadcasting system approached the Seventh-day Adventist leaders in Washington, D.C. and said they wanted to do a TV documentary program presenting the work of

Seventh-day Adventist. They wanted the names of two of our health institutions to contact. One institution they were recommended to interview was the Loma Linda Sanitarium and Hospital where our medical college is located. The other was Wildwood.

Some of you have seen that documentary. What an interesting thing it is to see one of the largest of our health institutions, and one of the smallest, side by side in that documentary. They are both destined to present the health message to make man whole. I thank God for the privilege we have of being a little part of a great work. What do you say?

I know that many of you would say something in praise to God this Christmas Eve for the greatest gift of Jesus, and His continued gift of health and healing to those who look to the mercy seat for light and life. But I want to say that I thank God for what health reform has done for millions of people through our health journals. I thank God for *Ministry of Healing* and the other books. And I pray that every one of us may have as the reward of study and practice not merely the six extra years that statistics show that the average Seventh-day Adventist has, but in abundant life the joy of knowing Jesus as the Great Physician and personal Savior.

I thank God that God led me to Loma Linda as a young man to be trained as a medical missionary. I have had the joy of devoting my whole life to it. If I had it to do over again, I would do the same. It is a most rewarding life. God has given us the joy of seeing hundreds of people find health, and hundreds of people accepting this glorious message.

My heart is happy tonight. I want to lay my tribute down at the feet of Jesus. In my imagination I join those shepherds at Bethlehem to worship that newborn One who from eternity and the days of everlasting took His beginning in this world in that humble place. And in my imagination I join with that group in Rochester, New York over a hundred years ago who sought the Lord and received that glorious revelation. And I join once again with those who established this place.

Precious Lord, we thank Thee for Thy love. Thy delights are with the sons of men. Thou dost want Thy children healthy and happy as well as holy. We acknowledge Thy divine gift in the gift of Jesus, and the wonderful revelations of His love expressed in practical health and healing. Tonight we lay our tribute at the feet of our Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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