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What is health evangelism?

Health is a great treasure. It is the richest possession mortals can have. Wealth, honor, or learning is dearly purchased if it be at the loss of the vigor of health. None of these attainments can secure happiness, if health is wanting. It is a terrible sin to abuse the health that God has given us; for every abuse of health enfeebles us for life and makes us losers, even if we gain any amount of education.*

educate participants regarding the adverse consequences of risky behaviors and advocate specific behavior changes to promote or recover health. Health programs measure certain variables to document a person's starting status at the beginning of a program and ending status after a program. Measuring the changes that have taken place during a program documents the effectiveness of the program in alter-

to pray. Prayer is the way a person contacts Jesus. By prayer a person can ask for help, express gratitude for success, and enjoy fellowship with Jesus.

Health evangelism programs, when conducted correctly, provide an opportunity for people to experience daily contact with a Christian helper for encouragement, and social and spiritual support. Church members can share their own experiences with Jesus. They can pray with those who are struggling to change. They can form friendships. The bonds that are formed may open doors for future opportunities to share Jesus. When conducted in your church, these health programs provide opportunities for the community to become familiar with your church facility—helping them feel at home in your church environment. Then, hopefully, they will be more inclined to come to the church for other programs and maybe church services.

In this day and age where healthful living is being emphasized in many societies, we must be willing to seize these wonderful evangelistic opportunities. We, as pastors, need to prayerfully consider every way to share Jesus' love with others. In Jeremiah, God said, "Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth" (Jer. 33:6, NASB). This promise given to Judah and Israel is within our grasp as well. God has provided a map to living healthy in Him; let's share it with the world! ❏

* Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1951), 186.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT JESUS CAN EMPOWER PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE HIS HELP TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES.

Traditional health education communicates information regarding the risks associated with unhealthy living and provides behavior change strategies designed to correct bad habits and addictions. Only a small percentage of people who attend such health education programs make permanent, long-term changes.

The good news is that Jesus can empower people who choose His help to make healthy choices.

Health evangelism focuses on Christ-centered help integrated with a health program. The evangelistic component of health evangelism introduces people to Jesus. Lasting behavior change is difficult for many, but a relationship with Jesus can make a difference—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Most health programs are essentially secular in nature. They

ing a person's life. Common health variables include blood sugar level, cholesterol levels, blood pressure, weight, body mass index, and many other characteristics.

Some of these secular health programs are conducted by churches but have no spiritual component. It is a missed opportunity when a person comes to a church, meets members, learns some health information, but does not learn of Jesus, who provides the power to change.

Health evangelism is evangelistic activity *in* a health program. In health evangelism programs, a person is introduced to the Bible as a valuable resource for total health. The Bible has many examples of the help that Jesus provides to those who are seeking better health.

In these specialized evangelism programs, a person is taught how

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